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# Historic preservation, history, and the African American : a discussion and framework for change

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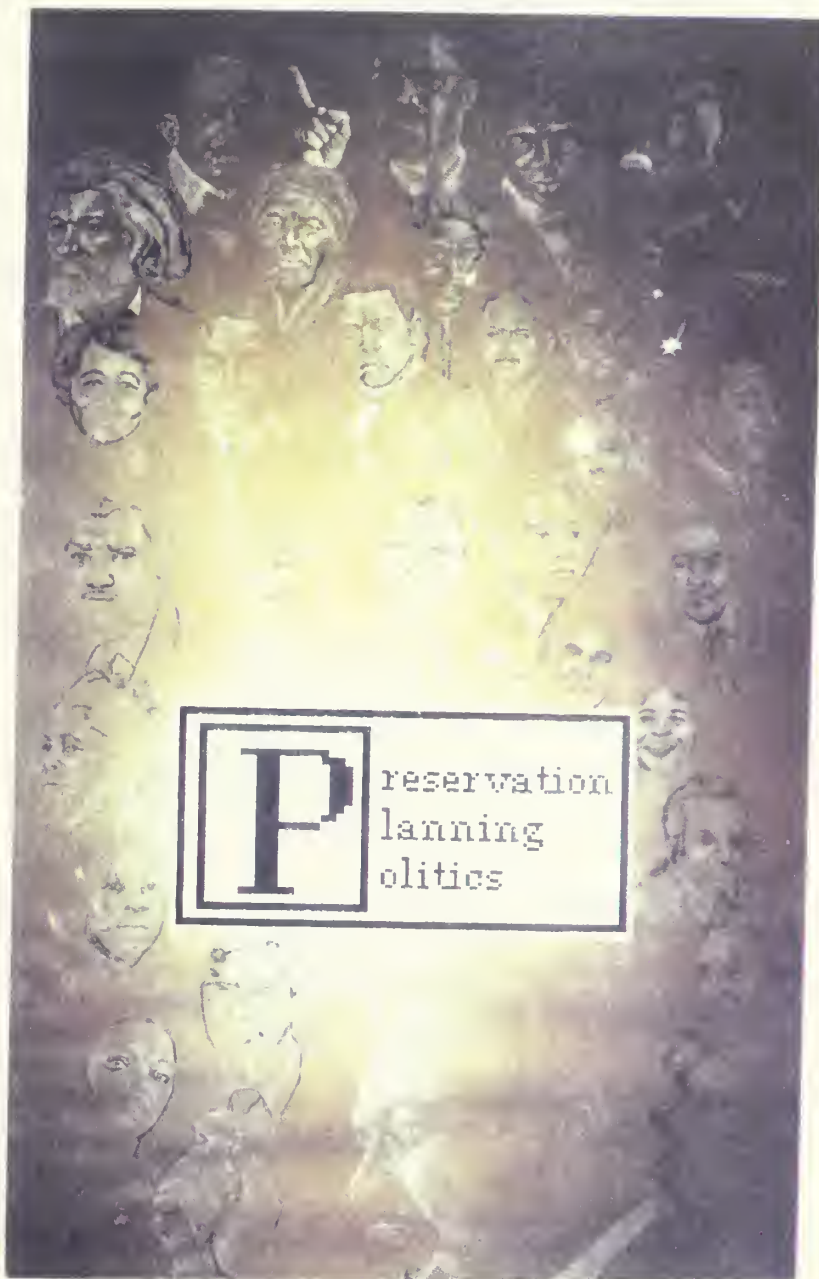


HISTORIC PRESERVATION, HISTORY, AND THE  
AFRICAN AMERICAN

A DISCUSSION AND FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE

BY

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T256959



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I owe special thanks to Dr. Elizabeth Lyon and the Georgia Office of Historic Preservation for giving me the opportunity to work in a state historic preservation office. During my tenure with this office, I had the opportunity to work with the Georgia Minority Historic Preservation Committee and the Network for Minority Preservation. I was also exposed to the core preservation programs, such as the National Register of Historic Places, Environmental Review and Compliance, and Administration, Education, and Outreach. These experiences opened my eyes to the cause of minority historic preservation and gave me the impetus to write this paper.

Several organizations and individuals made key contributions to this effort. Principal among them are: the entire staff at OHP; the Minority Historic Preservation Committee; Lloyd Childers of the North Carolina Department of



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For Terry

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## PREFACE

This paper assesses the level of professional and community-based participation by African Americans in the historic preservation movement at the state level. The research which forms the basis of my argument was collected from preservation offices in eleven southern states, and serves as a partial follow-up to a three year study conducted by the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers (NCSHPO). The states chosen for this analysis were Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.

My focus on state programs may not capture efforts by local governments and private preservation organizations to increase the level of minority participation in their programs. This is not to say that such activities are not taking place. Additionally, my concentration on a specific region of the country may not fully reflect the status of minority involvement in preservation from a national perspective. As this paper attempts to integrate a broad range of topics (historic preservation, history, the African American, politics, and planning), I have targeted it to a

specific area of the country to help maintain a manageable project scope. I further chose the bounds of my study based upon the following three assumptions:

(1) Public agencies and organizations are likely to have higher levels of minority participation than are the private sector due to the normative role of government to provide equal opportunity.

(2) State preservation offices are the primary channel of access to the National Register of Historic Places, and thus are a central source of information about nominations and preservation activity arising from the local level. From this position, the states can serve as the collective conscience of their respective jurisdictions by forcing them to consider whether they have been comprehensive and fair in recognizing minority resources. Local areas, especially those with few or no minority residents, may not recognize or acknowledge this concern.

(3) The foundation and early history of African Americans is in the South, which suggests that the greatest concentration, and certainly the older of the physical resources associated with this history are also located in this region of the country.

Based upon these premises, I believe that a study of public (state) preservation programs in the South is likely

to render more favorable results than would a national study which included minority participation at all levels of government as well as in private preservation organizations. Any broader study would likely show even lower levels of African American participation.

In this paper, I argue that underrepresentation in the historic preservation movement contributes to a number of disturbing trends in the African American community. Some of these include, (1) the continuing erosion of the historical linkage between blacks and their ancestral heritage in America, (2) the perpetuation of cultural racism in the primary institutions of this country, (3) loss of pride in large sectors of the black community, (4) loss of faith in the freedom and opportunities promised by the Constitution (betrayal), (4) the inability or lack of desire to mount organized resistance, (5) the loss of an identifiable role and a sense of orientation in American society, and (6) a general disinterest or aversion to history and historic preservation among some blacks.

The target audience for this discussion consists of four primary groups, (a) The African American community, (b) the preservation community, (c) the political community at the state and local levels, and (d) the planning profession. For African Americans, I hope that the paper will help to put the



historical experience of blacks in perspective and stir pride in the varied accomplishments that have been made in the face of tremendous adversity. I hope that more blacks will recognize the need to preserve the reminders of their heritage and understand that such physical proof is an undeniable source of testimony to the legacy of their forefathers. I hope that more people will see a need to help recognize and save a part of American heritage which is rapidly disappearing from our midst.

For the preservation community, I present the research in Chapter One as evidence of a need for this group to intensify efforts to reach out to a largely latent source of support for their movement. Some states are ahead of others in taking initiatives to include minorities in their programs. Herein, I call for a reaffirmation by the states to strive to meet the recommendations of the NCSHPO regarding minority participation in state preservation programs, building upon the successes and experience of others. Secondly, there is a need for more membership organizations in the preservation community to open their doors to minorities. Such groups represent the mainstream vehicle for individual participation at the local level. Whether true or not, many minority groups perceive this door to be closed to them.

For the political and planning communities, I suggest

historic preservation as a strategy for improving social and economic conditions in our cities and towns. I seek to dispel the myth still held by many planners and politicians that the goals of historic preservation run counter to their own. I also discuss the tremendous impact that these two bodies of professionals exert on the evolution of the built environment, including how many of their decisions have hurt the cause of minority preservation. I assert that some times the harm is purposefully inflicted and at other times it is unintentional. Finally, I present ways how these players might use their influence to help.

In the course of reading this paper, one might ask how I can justify committing scarce resources to historic preservation when society is faced with more pressing social problems, such as homelessness, unemployment, and drug abuse. How can an activity which is viewed by much of society as a luxury or hobby for affluent whites gain an audience with people engaged in a constant struggle to have the most basic of needs met? My argument is for a balanced investment in African American heritage preservation as visual testimony to past accomplishments, and as a way of injecting renewed pride and sense of identity into a people. In this light, heritage preservation becomes an essential prerequisite to lasting progress in the African American community. It becomes a

strategy for attacking these perplexing social problems from their very foundation, from within ourselves.

### Chapter Overview

Chapter One presents a series of tables which summarize and analyze the results of my research. I call it Underrepresentation: The Evidence. To establish a norm from which to assess the tabular data, I use historical figures for black population in the surveyed states from 1850 to 1990. The figures themselves are included as Appendix E.

In Chapter Two, I discuss the consequences that occur as a result of underrepresentation. I also present several case studies for illustrative purposes. Some of the cases have had positive outcomes, and were selected to show how some neighborhoods have responded to save their heritage resources. They attest to the fact that community action teamed with outside support can make a difference.

Chapter Three provides a short historical overview of the African American experience. Here, I move quickly from the arrival of the first slave ship to present-day America, highlighting some of the mechanisms used throughout our history to counter the struggle for equality by peoples of color. I introduce the term "Cultural Racism," which is used to describe how political, economic, social, and educational

institutions have effectively been used to promote the values of a single race, and to glorify the physical forms which represent these values. Cultural Racism also implies the exploitation of power to systematically eliminate or distort the societal elements which testify to the important role minorities have played in American history. At first glance, Chapter Three may appear as a sidetrack from the central thesis of this paper. However, I believe it is both important and relevant, for reasons I expound upon at the beginning of the chapter.

In Chapter Four, I discuss the History Revisionist Movement. Supporters of this campaign seek to amend the annals of history in the United States to accurately reflect the contributions of minorities. They further seek to institute new school curricula, which will teach future generations of Americans an additional perspective of how our nation has come to be what it is today; a perspective which is more considerate of minority contributions and does not gloss over the hard lessons of the past.

Perceived Barriers to Greater Participation is the title of Chapter Five. This discussion presents the most common responses to critical questions asked as part of my survey of state preservation offices. Here, I present and discuss the answers most often given by the respondents.



In Chapter Six, I discuss the central importance of preservation education in addressing the problems and barriers that face a culturally diverse American society. I go further to discuss how education can be used to promote mutual understanding and appreciation among the races. Today, re-education is needed to counter a well contrived campaign of misinformation which is older than the nation itself, one that has sought to teach people that the basis of their relative worth in society lies in their skin color and socio-economic status.

Chapter Six also presents model projects and programs from the states surveyed in the course of this effort. These initiatives are designed to recognize significant African American contributions to our history, to inform, and to foster greater interest in historic preservation among blacks. Georgia programs are given more detailed treatment here, due simply to my familiarity with them. I hope that these initiatives will offer ideas and inspiration to other states in their quest to further their own programs. They may also serve as models for local governments, private institutions, and even community organizations.

Chapter Seven is geared towards the political and planning aspects of minority preservation and historic preservation in general. Politicians, and to some extent,



planners, make many of the decisions which shape our physical environment and our lives. Historically, African Americans have not owned or exercised much control over their physical environment, and this fact has translated into their communities being the first to yield to new development and other social pressures, growth often taking the path of least resistance. Here, I discuss how the actions of politicians and planners can cause unintended injury. I also point out how paternalistic approaches to dealing with minority communities can do more harm than good, due to skewed perceptions of what might be best for others. All too often what planners and politicians perceive to be best for a certain community proves to be entirely wrong.

Chapter Eight establishes a conceptual framework for effecting change. Here, I call for greater independent organization, networking, and cooperation within the African American community. I argue that blacks must now take the leading role in the preservation of their own physical history. The National Register status of many current African American historic properties has been accomplished by virtue of being "carry-alongs" in larger area surveys, as a result of Section 106 review by the state, or due to reactionary measures by individuals in response to development pressures. I argue that African Americans must

take a pro-active position in historic preservation and not count on others to do it for them, or wait until the bulldozer is at their doorstep before taking a stance. I discuss the resources which already exist in the African American community, as well as the role of the major players who must formalize and carry out this plan. I also identify the preservation community, the planning community, and the political community as having key supporting roles.

Chapter Nine summarizes the important issues raised in this paper and then poses a challenge to the various players I mentioned above to make it all work.

Chapter Ten is a group of appendices which contain information and constructs which might help states, municipalities, and private organizations further integrate their programs, and also help grassroots groups and individuals in minority communities to organize and prepare themselves to be more effective participants.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABHC	Black Heritage Council (Alabama)
CBD	Central Business District
CLG	Certified Local Government
HHA	Houston Housing Authority
NHPA	National Historic Preservation Act of 1966
NCSHPO	National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers
MHPC	Minority Historic Preservation Committee (Georgia)
OHP	Office of Historic Preservation (Georgia)
NMP	Network for Minority Preservation (Georgia)
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
NRRB	National Register Review Board
SCAAHF	Study Commission on African American Heritage in Florida

## CHAPTER 1

### UNDERREPRESENTATION: THE EVIDENCE

This chapter presents the major findings of two separate research efforts into the status of minority representation in state historic preservation programs. The first study was commissioned by the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers at their 1988 annual gathering. The NCSHPO realized that there was a lack of effective participation by minorities in the preservation movement, and thus formed a task force to study the issue and make recommendations to the NCSHPO Board. The task force surveyed all fifty states and generated a document entitled Final Report: Minority Participation in State Programs with the following three objectives in mind:

a) To determine the current level of minority representation in state offices.

b) To gather information on the types of programs each state has established to bring more minorities into the national preservation movement. To determine where and how minority issues in preservation are being managed with success.

c) To develop goals to address the need for greater minority participation.

The report was delivered in March of 1991 and included action steps designed to recruit minority professionals. This document also contained a January, 1990 status report of minority programs. Thirty-six states responded to the written survey. The final report was issued to each state to aid in establishing more effective minority programs in the future. Addressing the fact that the final document was issued some time after the states were actually surveyed, the NCSHPO final report suggests that a repeat of the survey today would show increased activity in several states.

In July, 1991, I initiated a follow-up effort to assess the level to which certain states had implemented the recommendations contained in the Task Force report. My research involves the eleven states listed in the Preface. Most of my data was gathered through a telephone survey, with written correspondence provided in some cases. Nine of the eleven states responded in one form or the other. I also gathered data on African American resource listings on the National Register of Historic Places. With the aid of the Georgia Office of Historic Preservation, I was able to obtain a voluminous printout of these resources from the Keeper of the National Register, National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior, in Washington, D.C.



I present the findings of these two research efforts in the series of tables that follow. Each table is followed by a brief description and data analysis. Table I presents the results of the NCSHPO inquiry into the number of minority professionals on state preservation office staffs. Tables II through IV show the quantities and characteristics of African American resources listed on the National Register in the southern states. More specifically, Table II compares the number of African American resource listings to the total listings for each of the eleven states. Table III categorizes the listings in each state by resource type (e.g., house or church). Table IV separates the listings according to the historical period for which they are significant, as well as by the year in which each resource achieved National Register standing. Finally, Table V presents a synopsis of grant activity in support of African American programs by the five states that provided this information.

#### Table (1)

##### Minority Professionals in Historic Preservation Offices

Sixteen of the thirty-eight states responding to the NCSHPO survey have minorities on their professional staffs. Of the sixteen, half previously employed other minority

professionals who have subsequently left these offices. Fifteen of the respondents stated that they have never employed a minority professional. Overall, the thirty-eight states reported having ninety-nine (99) minorities, professional or otherwise, on staff in 1990. These included seventeen in preservation-related fields (36CFR61), twenty-three professionals in indirectly related fields, eleven accounting staffers, and forty-eight employees in secretarial roles. Preservation-related fields include historic preservation, history, architecture, archaeology, and architectural history. Professions with a less direct relationship to historic preservation include planning, business administration, public administration, education, museum administration, anthropology, and ethnography. Table I also shows that eighty-one minority professionals have left their jobs with state offices (previous staff) for unknown reasons. Finally, this exhibit shows that forty minority applicants sought employment with state offices in 1990 while 202 submitted applications in the four year timeframe from 1985-1989. Unfortunately the quantity of total applications, which would allow percentage comparisons, was not available.

In arriving at national estimates for minority representation on state preservation staffs, I calculated an average staff size (16.72) as shown below, by totaling

positions for the staffs of all the states (836) and dividing by fifty. Calculations are based on positions authorized, vice positions filled, and thus includes vacancies. Programs in the non-states (e.g., American Samoa, Guam, and Micronesia) were excluded due to their native populations. The data was drawn from the 1991 Directory of State Historic Preservation Programs.

In the charts below, I have divided the average staff size of seventeen positions into the four occupational categories shown. The distribution of positions between 36CFR61, Others, Accounting, and Secretarial is based upon a comparison of the occupational make-up of several state offices with an actual staff allocation within three position of the average (between 14 and 20). Based upon these criteria, I made the following projections:

	Average Staff Size	States Responding	Total
	17 <sup>a</sup>	x	38 <sup>b</sup> = 646
36CFR61	10 (est.)	x	38 = 380
Others <sup>c</sup>	3 (est.)	x	38 = 226
Accounting	2 (est.)	x	38 = 76
Secretarial	2 (est.)	x	38 = 76

---

a. Rounded up from 16.72. The seventeen positions are then distributed into the four occupational categories shown above.

b. Thirty-eight states provided data on minority staff in their offices to NCSHPO. This number is used here as a multiplier to determine approximate totals for preservation office employees in only the responding states.

c. Others refers to non 36CFR61 qualified professionals.

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Actual reported figures from Table (1) are then use to establish the following 1990 national estimates for minorities in state programs.

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36CFR61	$17/380 = .045 = 5\%$
Others	$23/226 = .101 = 10\%$
Accounting	$11/ 76 = .144.= 14\%$
Secretarial	$48/ 76 = .632 = 63\%$
<hr/>	
Totals	$99/646 = .153 = 15\%$

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These findings indicate that minorities comprise roughly 15% of state preservation office staffs. The calculations also show that minorities account for roughly 5% of professional preservation-related staff, 10% of other professional staff, 14% of accounting staff, and 63% of secretarial staff in state historic preservation offices. Of the 99 minorities reported in 1990, 59 were employed in non-professional capacities, which means that only about 6% ( $99 - 50 = 40$ ;  $40/646 = 6\%$ ) of this total worked in capacities where they could be directly involved in the treatment of historic minority resources.

Placing theses figures in light of 1990 black population statistics (Appendix E), five of the ten states in the U.S with the largest black population are among those I surveyed, as are eight of the ten with the highest percentage of blacks. African Americans comprised roughly 22% of the population in the eleven southern states, compared to a 12%

national average. Additionally, a full 44% of the nation's African American population lived in the eleven survey states in 1990 (28% of the total U. S. population also lived in these states in 1990). And since the figures in Table I include all minorities and not just African Americans, the actual level of representation is even smaller than presented here.

Furthermore, my follow-up research revealed that only two of the eleven states have a full-time minority professional (36CFR61) on staff at the present time. Three others do currently have minority interns in accordance with one of the goals set forth in the NCSHPO Final Report. No state reported receiving applications from or filling a vacancy with a minority professional since the NCSHPO survey.

It may be interesting to delve into the question of why the eighty-one previous minority staff members left their jobs. A second question is why the number of minority applicants dropped from an average of fifty during the four year period from 1985-1989 to only forty in 1990. These occurrences could be due to perfectly natural circumstances, such as new employment opportunities, migration, and smaller numbers of qualified candidates. The fact that economic recession forced many state offices to curb hiring practices during this period may have also had an impact.



These phenomena, however, could also indicate a degree of disinterest or frustration in the manner in which minority resources have been historically overlooked by preservationists. Surfacing in the mid 1980's, large scale attention to minority resources is a relatively recent phenomenon at all levels of the historic preservation movement, and is due partly in response to more activity springing up from the grassroots level.

African Americans practicing professionally in historic preservation is an obvious and direct way to raise the level of consciousness in the black community and increase advocacy for the preservation of black cultural resources. At present, there is an apparent dearth of qualified black preservation professionals, especially those with university training. One state office, while taking applications for a survey coordinator and an architectural historian, sent advertisements to several universities including predominantly black colleges. Of sixty-six applicants, not a single one was from an African American student. Clearly there is a need for more minority training in preservation-related fields, direct recruitment, scholarships and incentive programs, and entry-level work opportunities. Partnerships must be established between our universities and the preservation field to institute programs designed to

inform, interest, and attract more African American collegians to historic preservation as a career choice. Internships, cooperative opportunities, and other such initiatives must be given consideration.

African Americans working in non-professional capacities are also an important asset. Through office experience, these individuals learn about the field, the programs, and the operation of the state offices. They are in prime positions to assist formal and informal preservation networks in the African American community. They can be a vital source of information on where to go for answers to preservation-related questions, how to build preservation networks, how to apply for membership in local preservation organizations, and what sources of funding and other incentives are available.

A further issue of interest arose from my research into African American representation on state staffs. Those few who are currently practicing tend to have all work involving black resources routed to them for action. They have become black preservationists in stead of just preservationists who happen to be black. This seems to be a problematic result of the current imbalance in white and minority staff people. A major test of the future success in integrating the historic preservation movement will be the ability for minorities in

the field to simply be preservationists.

### Local and Private Sector Preservation

My focus on state preservation programs is not intended to discount the central importance of preservation at the local government level and in the private sector. Greater African American representation is also needed in these areas. These groups are, in fact, the first line of defense for historically significant properties. Local government is the only place where legally enforceable regulations can be imposed for the protection of historic properties, and the preservation activities of local government are greatly influenced by powerful private preservation groups. Together, they impart a great deal of influence on what will be fought for, and what will be ultimately recognized as worth saving. If more minorities were involved in local government and private preservation efforts, they could work for the inclusion of the resources in the opening agendas of these organizations, instead of waiting and hoping to catch omissions in nominations submitted to the states for National Register consideration.

Like NCSHPO, The National Trust for Historic Preservation and other private preservation organizations are responding to the need to increase minority participation in their

programs. Although the Trust can trace early efforts back to its 1970 national conference, concerted attempts to address the need for cultural diversity in historic preservation really got going in the early 1980's, when articles dealing with the topic began to surface with regularity in Preservation Times, the Trust's monthly publication. Since this time, the Trust has provided matching grants, technical support, and other types of assistance to a number of specific efforts. The Trust is currently preparing a special edition of its Information Series booklet to highlight successful cases of historic preservation in minority communities.

# Minority Professionals in State Historic Preservation Offices

Survey: September-November 1990

**TABLE I**

	Professionals Meeting 36CFR61	Other Professionals	Accounting Staff	Secretarial Staff
1990 Staff	17	23	11	48
Previous Staff	11	34	6	30
Applicants				
1990	4	9	0	27
1985-1989	9	70	17	106

Source: Final Report: Minority Participation  
in State Programs (National Conference of State  
Historic Preservation Officers)



## Table (2)

### African American Resources on the National Register

This table shows the total number of minority listings on the National Register for each of the eleven southern states in my survey. No assumptions were required of me in determining what constitutes an African American resource since this determination was made by the National Park Service personnel who prepared the computer printout mentioned earlier. The document was dated July 25, 1991 and therefore does not contain any properties listed after this date. I should also point out that a single listing in many cases includes several properties, such as in the case of a historic district. Therefore, the figures below do not reflect the total number of individual properties in a given state.

The table shows that roughly 2.2%, or 329 of 15,011 National Register listings in the South are directly linked to black history. The table also shows that South Carolina has listed almost twice as many African American resources as its closest regional neighbor. North Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama ranked second, third and fourth respectively in this regard. Approximately 6.5% of the National Register listings in South Carolina are directly linked to African American heritage, but even this highest proportion is most likely a

discounted reflection of the true contribution of blacks to historical development in the South. Again using population statistics as the norm, Appendix E shows that blacks have represented between 29% and 44% of the population in these states in the one hundred year period between 1840 and 1940. Appendix E further shows that between 71% and 82% of the nation's black population lived in the survey states during the same period. It is very unlikely that such a pronounced historical concentration of blacks in one area, would leave so few sites worthy of recognition. I believe the following quote from Ebony magazine captures this point very well, "No region of our great nation can lay greater claim as an originator or beneficiary of such great contributions than the South."

This low total supports my contention that the contribution of blacks has not been adequately recognized through the preservation of physical resources. I believe this is due in part to there being very few African American professionals practicing in the field. Other central reasons include:

- o the lack of minority involvement in the local organizations that initiate many property nominations.

- o lack of a black preservation constituency at the grassroots level.
- o lack of awareness at the state level of the existence or significance of black historic resources, and how to apply National Register criteria to them so that their eligibility is apparent.
- o lingering institutional and cultural racism at all levels of preservation activity.

The data presented in Table II is not intended to reflect any state's willingness or commitment to list African American resources. These figures may be the result of an uneven distribution of worthy sites, or "surviving sites" when you take into account the irreparable damage that has been done by urban renewal and transportation programs, unsympathetic alterations, and the combination of time and neglect. The totals could also be a reflection of historic population trends as further suggested by Appendix E.

A final point which must be considered in the case of all states is how many of the resources have been identified and saved as a result of the environmental review (Section 106) process. Section 106 of the NHPA requires an assessment of all federally-supported projects for possible adverse impact on historic or "potentially eligible" resources. The

requirement also calls for plans to mitigate such impacts. A great number of the "potentially eligible" properties end up as verified historic black properties. In these cases, proposed development, in effect, acts a vehicle to bring recognition to resources which might otherwise go unnoticed. And furthermore, since the mitigation of impact often results in committing funds to protect the resources, Section 106 can be looked to as one of the most potent and effective tools for bringing more minority resources to the consciences of preservation professionals, as well as exposing willful and unwitting plans to build on sites containing historic African American properties.

Florida was noted to have the fewest number of actual listings with six, while Arkansas had the second fewest with fourteen. The future of African American preservation in Florida has recently received a "shot in the arm" with the creation of the Study Commission on African American History in Florida (SCAAHF) in 1990. One of the commission's goals is to step up efforts to identify and preserve African American historical resources. This initiative and those of other states is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six. State preservation professionals in Arkansas partially attribute their low total to the destruction of an untold number of historic black resources by frequent flooding along

the Mississippi River Valley in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They also stated that their office does not have the resources to survey the entire state and that black Arkansans simply have not responded to their public outreach campaign. I will address problems of this sort the chapter entitled The Role of Education.

Finally,I should point out that these figures represent only a snapshot in time. Some state totals are likely to have increased since the writing of this paper. The number of listings for each state was taken from the 1991 Directory of State Historic Preservation Programs.



# African-American Resources Listed on the National Register of Historic Places An Analysis of Southern States

TABLE II

STATE	* Total National Register Listings	African-American Resource Listings	Percent African- American of Total
Alabama	864	35	4.1
Arkansas	1,055	14	1.3
Florida	822	6	0.7
Georgia	1,378	38	2.8
Louisiana	817	17	2.1
Mississippi	928	31	3.3
North Carolina	1,705	46	2.7
South Carolina	1,071	70	6.5
Tennessee	1,375	23	1.7
Texas	2,120	25	2.5
Virginia	1,438	24	1.1
Total	15,011	329	2.2

Source: Computer Printout: Black Properties on  
the National Register (National Register of  
Historic Places; U.S. Department of Interior)

### Table (3)

#### African American Listings by Resource Type

This exhibit shows the distribution of resources by categorical type for each state. The categories are Houses, Churches, Educational Resources, Historic Districts, and Other. The Other classification includes commercial buildings, cemeteries, monuments, hospitals, and commercial buildings. This analysis shows a rather uniform distribution of resources among the five categories, with churches and houses accounting for the largest portions. Most of the resources are modest in comparison to more magnificent architectural structures on the National Register. Although the total number of African American listings is small from a relative standpoint, their very presence represents a broadened interpretation of what can be considered historically significant. They show that the NRHP is not the exclusive domain of grand structures.

Most of the personal dwellings are significant as "shotgun" houses, a vernacular house type whose physical layout and methods of construction many scholars trace to West Africa.<sup>1</sup> A smaller portion of the house listings are important for their association with slavery (extant slave huts) or famous black figures in history. Fewer still have

<sup>1</sup> Carole Merritt, Historic Black Resources, Office of Historic Preservation, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, 1984, p.18.

significance for their architectural style.

The large number of churches are testimony to the fact that religion has always played a central role in African American history and was the earliest form of community institution for blacks. African Americans, from slavery to the present, have depended upon religion to keep alive their belief in a better tomorrow. The church represented many other things to early black Americans, including a place of refuge and rest, a social outlet, and a place of learning. Many educational institutions, including Morehouse and Spelman Colleges in Atlanta, grew from humble beginnings in church cellars.

The forty-nine historic educational institutions range from one-room school houses to large urban campuses such as the Atlanta University Complex. Progress in black education came in the face of stiff opposition from those who viewed black education as a threat to the majority culture. These advances, nonetheless, could not have been made without the financial support of white philanthropists such as Julius Rosenwald, and social aid groups like the American Missionary Society.

The historic districts are significant for the clues they provide regarding the broad settlements patterns of African Americans. Most of the historically black enclaves in

American cities developed as a result of segregationist laws like Jim Crow. As suggested in Chapter Three, past discriminatory policies have been replaced with complex zoning laws and other institutional devices which mask their intent through expensive and complex requirements. In his book entitled The Declining Significance of Race, William Julius Wilson marks the post-bellum transition of American race relations from a racial caste system, to racial oppression, and finally to an exploitation of class inequalities<sup>2</sup>. Chapter Seven discusses present-day mechanisms that are being employed through planning and political processes to achieve the same end.

<sup>2</sup> William J. Wilson, The Declining Significance of Race, The University of Chicago Press, 1978, p.2.

# African-American Listings on the National Register by Resource Type

## An Analysis of Southern States

TABLE III

STATE	Total African-American Listings	Houses	Churches	Educational Resources	Districts	Other
Alabama	35	6	13	1	9	6
Arkansas	14	2	2	5	0	1
Florida	6	3	6	1	0	0
Georgia	38	6	10	7	12	3
Louisiana	17	4	3	5	2	3
Mississippi	31	7	5	5	10	4
North Carolina	46	8	12	11	7	8
South Carolina	70	28	16	6	10	10
Tennessee	23	3	5	2	6	7
Texas	25	8	6	0	5	6
Virginia	24	4	3	6	4	7
Total	329	79	81	49	65	55
Percentage	100					

Source: Computer Printout: Black Properties on the National Register (National Register of Historic Places; U.S. Department of Interior)



#### Table (4)

##### African American Listings by Date and Period of Significance

The upper portion of this exhibit categorizes the resources by "Period of Significance". With respect to this category, the table shows that only ten listings have importance in the 18th Century, and only two resources (Stone River Slave Rebellion Site and Dafuskie Island Historic District-South Carolina) are significant to the earliest period (1700-1749). Over half of the 329 total listings are linked to the fifty year period following the Civil War and Emancipation, which could indicate the impact freedom had on the capacity of blacks to make significant historical accomplishments. An overwhelming majority of the pre-twentieth century sites are either churches or related to the slave culture, as might be expected. Shotgun houses, schools, and churches are prominent from the late nineteenth century through the 1920s. Finally, many of the later sites are significant for their association with the Civil Rights Movement and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The lower section of Table (4) classifies the resources by the year in which they were listed on the National Register. The NRHP was created by an act of Congress in 1966. Its intended purpose was to identify and preserve important historic resources with significance at the

national, state, and local levels. Many of the most visible symbols of American history (e.g., the structures and monuments of Washington D.C.) were summarily listed with the Register's inception.

These findings show that only four African American resources were listed by 1970. Two of the four were listed in 1966, these being the Tuskegee Institute National Historic District in Alabama and the Booker T. Washington National Monument in Virginia. In the table, I have broken the time periods into five year increments. The numbers indicate a significant and steady increase in the frequency of listings after 1970. The stirring of the national consciousness in the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement may partially account for this phenomenon. The largest volume of listings occurred in the latest five year period (1986-1990), in response to the heightened concern with cultural diversity in the historic preservation.

# African-American Listings on the National Register by Listing Date/Period of Significance

## An Analysis of Southern States

TABLE IV

Timeframe	Period of Significance	Listing Date
1700-1749	1	
1750-1799	9	
1800-1824	23	
1825-1849	24	
1850-1874	54	
1875-1899	89	
1900-1924	84	
1925-1949	34	
1950-1974	11	
1986-1970		4
1971-1975		42
1976-1980		87
1981-1985		82
1986-1990		103
1991-		11
Total	329	329

Source: Computer Printout: Black Properties on the National Register (National Register of Historic Places; U.S. Department of Interior)

## Table (5)

### A Summary of Grant Activity by State

This final table shows the number and value of subgrants issued by state programs in support of African American projects. The table only addresses monies awarded in support of planning, surveys, and community education. Several states submitted further information on high cash value rehabilitation grants funded through a variety of mechanisms. This information was purposely excluded from the exhibit so as not to distort the relative nature of the information. I did this with full knowledge that the omitted figures may represent specific initiatives designed to help overcome inherent or inadvertent biases in normal grant activities. I felt it was more important to establish a common basis to evaluate these figures.

Five of the eleven states provided data on their grant activity. Only three of the five provided information on the number and value of total grants, which is necessary to derive the proportion awarded in support of African American projects. Several factors further limit the comparative value of the data. Foremost is its incompleteness. Other difficulties include variances in budget size among the states, fiscal constraints, and differences in the number of qualified requests for financial support. The analysis

presented below may not be representative of the group of eleven, but is nonetheless provided as an indicator of the level of financial commitment by a few individual states. To quote one of the preservation professionals I contacted, "One's heart is where is where their money is."

Table (5) shows that Mississippi awarded the largest number of grants related to African American projects, with twelve. Georgia's total of five grants is based on three years of data whereas the others are based upon five years. A simple algebraic calculation indicates that Georgia would have given roughly eight grants over a five year period. The greatest dollar amount was \$426,657, committed by the state of Georgia. Of the states providing complete data, Mississippi spent the largest proportion of total money on African American projects. Georgia would have granted the most funding to black resource projects based upon extrapolation of the total shown (\$53,000) out to a five year basis. Georgia also had the largest proportion in terms of dollar value with eighteen percent.



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## CHAPTER 2

### THE CONSEQUENCES

This chapter presents five short case examples which illustrate the consequences that result from lack of effective participation. The obvious fact is that few blacks and other minorities are practicing professionally at the state and local level in preservation, and even fewer are actively involved in private membership organizations. I believe that this is a primary cause for the low number of African American resources receiving attention in the historic preservation community. And although the major focus in this paper is preservation, it is important to note that other professions have a powerful and even more direct impact on the evolution of the built environment. Chief among these are planners, developers, and politicians. Preservationists, in fact, are often placed in a reactive mode, seeking ways to combat or mitigate the threat that these decision-makers pose to historically significant resources.

Without offering supporting evidence, I would venture to say that researching these fields would also render evidence that African Americans are underrepresented. I make these

points to say that increased consciousness and participation alone are insufficient to ensure that more of the resources will be recognized and saved. Heightened consciousness, higher levels of involvement, and organized interaction with these other professions are also absolutely necessary. I discuss preservation in light of these other professions in Chapter Seven.

#### Case I: Rat's Row - Moultrie, GA

Rat's Row was an all-black community of shotgun houses and other historically significant structures in Moultrie, Georgia. A majority of the local polity, including the mayor and council, local planners, law enforcement officials, and many Rat's Row residents succeeded in their drive to have the neighborhood "bulldozed". The well-minded intent of this coalition was to remove a dark symbol of drugs, crime, and urban blight from their city, and to replace it with a new public housing project.

Local officials had succeeded in acquiring CDBG funds to rehabilitate the area, and viewed clearing and reconstruction as the only means of erasing the stigma of Rat's Row. Razing the community would remove the ugly eyesore, increase public safety, and relieve a burden on local law enforcement. Many Rat's Row residents supported demolition because,

understandably, wanted standard housing and a more wholesome living environment for themselves and their families. This is an example of the problem preservationists face when they must try to convince local residents that they have something worth saving, when the residents themselves have more basic needs at heart.

The demolition was opposed by a small group of residents, and by local preservationists who recognized the importance of the resources. Supporters of preservation contacted OHP, whose preliminary survey showed that the area qualified for listing on the National Register. Despite having this knowledge, the city went forth with, and in fact, expedited its plans to clear Rat's Row.

Moultrie took the expedient route to urban change, and as a result, a historic district is forever lost. This fact becomes even sadder when we realize that the drug dealers and other malefactors who were the object of this action, remain in place. The experience of Moultrie reinforces the stereotype that historic black neighborhoods, and especially shotgun houses, are magnets for drugs and crime. It depicts the real life dilemma of poor inner-city residents who must often choose between an unattractive and very dangerous community which outsiders are telling them is significant, and the vision of a shiny, new unit within a public housing

project. This predicament was a real obstacle to unification in the Rat's Row neighborhood, and the resulting division made it easier for the city to carry out its demolition plans. What Rat's Row and Moultrie failed to realize, or at least acknowledge, was that they had a real alternative in historic preservation, albeit a longer term and more labor-intensive one. But unlike the expedient route taken, preserving Rat's Row would have heightened community awareness and pride, and possibly made a lasting difference. In Augusta (See Case V), such a difference is being made.

#### Case II: Arkansas: Historic Structures in the Flood Plain

The agent of destruction in this case is not man but nature, although humanity is a contributor through lack of knowledge and neglect. State preservation officials advised me of the fact that an untold number of African American historic resources have been lost due to their location along the flood-prone Mississippi River. A representative of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program stated that their office does not have the resources to survey the entire region. They have turned to an aggressive public education campaign, in hopes that residents would alert them to the whereabouts of endangered resources. To date, few have come forward, and it is unclear whether this is due to faulty



lines of communication or general disinterest among black Arkansans. Meanwhile, many of the extant resources lay defenselessly in the path of Mother Nature.

### Case III: The "Ma Rainey" House - Columbus, GA

Gertrude Pridgett Rainey, or "Ma" Rainey (1886-1939) was a pioneering blues singer and Columbus native. In 1904, she introduced blues as a part of her traveling act, and made some ninety-four records on the Paramount label by 1928.<sup>3</sup> Managing her own band, she went on to gain international fame. "Ma Rainey" is noted for having encouraged the careers of later famed black entertainers, including Fletcher Henderson, Louis Armstrong, and Bessie Smith. The long vacant, and now deteriorated home of "Ma Rainey" is the subject of an ongoing dispute between public officials, local preservation groups, and residents in Columbus.

For several months now, the city has struggled with the issue of whether the house is important enough to be saved. Once restored, supporters believe that it will have enormous value as a tourist attraction and symbol of cultural heritage for the city. While the dispute raged on, the house continued to deteriorate. Subsequent high winds and rain tore away part of the roof, causing more damage and further

<sup>3</sup> Historic Chattahoochee Commission, "Ma Rainey House receives Challenge Grant," Chattahoochee Trace, October 4, 1991.

destabilizing the building.

The original proposal for renovation called for the city to spend \$227,000 to rehabilitate the house and convert it into a blues museum.<sup>4</sup> The money was to come out of the budget set aside for the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of Columbus' discovery of America later this year. The project failed on its initial attempt to achieve the needed votes in Council, but would not die due to the dogged determination of local residents and the network of advocacy they were able to engender. On November 26, 1991, Columbus' mayor cast the deciding vote in favor of a resolution to spend \$90,000 to stabilize the run-down house.

Although the battle is far from won, organization and determination were used as effective tools to keep alive the hope that this vital resource might be preserved. Supporters in Columbus proved that there is power in the collective voice of the public. Their campaign attracted key support from the local media, and from organizations such as the state Office of Historic Preservation, The Minority Historic Preservation Committee, and the Historic Chattahoochee Commission, a private preservation group. The latter provided a challenge grant to the city in support of the restoration effort. The "Ma Rainey" House, although near

<sup>4</sup> "Council Votes \$90,000 for Rainey House," Columbus Ledger, November 27, 1991, p. A-1.

death, may yet live again.

Case IV: Houston's Fourth Ward: Blight or Treasure? What used to be a neighborhood of landscaped homes, brick streets, and thriving businesses, is now commonly referred to as the "war zone"<sup>5</sup> The Fourth Ward in Houston, Texas was once the long-time focal point of an established African American historic district. A thriving business center and residential community could be found here before urban renewal programs, federal highway projects, and encroachment by the city's sprawling CBD destroyed the integrity of the area. The Fourth Ward was established by freed slaves after the Civil War, and has structures which date back to 1870.<sup>6</sup> The district was listed on the National Register in 1985.

Today the forty block area is marked by delapidated houses, most of which lack such basic services as plumbing and heating. Many of the homes have been demolished or gutted by vandalism and fire. It has been documented that the Houston Housing Authority purposely delayed needed maintenance and repairs in hopes that it could secure approval to demolish what remains.<sup>7</sup> Houstonians are divided over whether the Fourth Ward should be saved. Preservationists cite the rich past of the Fourth Ward as the

<sup>5</sup> "Houston's Fourth Ward," Blight or Treasure?," The Medallion, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

justification for saving the district. Others see the area as an eyesore standing in the way of economic resurgence and development in the downtown. Preservation activists won the preliminary battle, when a U. S. District Judge gave the HHA sixty days to devise a plan to repair and rehabilitate the project.

This case shows that National Register status alone is often not enough to ensure preservation. Local governments must be involved in the process, and use local district designation to provide enforceable protection. This case is also important because historic preservation was upheld in a legal challenge. Community activism and recognition by the courts combined in this case to derail the development plans of the HHA and downtown business interests, and thus spare this historic community.

Case 5: Restoring Pride in the African American Community:  
Bethlehem and Laney-Walker Historic Districts - Augusta, GA

This final case example is the bittersweet tale of efforts to save two shotgun house districts in Augusta, Georgia. Several recent local ordinances in the city posed a tremendous threat to the future of these communities. Activists in Augusta contested public attempts to clear the houses in order to remove drug dealers. Many historic houses were torn down

before action was taken to stop it. This case is important because it illustrates the negative effect on residents when their neighborhoods are branded with condemnable designations such as "Crackville." The stigma permeates the entire community until even the respectable citizens lose faith in their capacity to reverse the downward spiral.

Thankfully, a small band of citizens were not satisfied with "old style" urban renewal as the only answer. With the support of OHP and the Minority Historic Preservation Committee, they have secured CDBG and state funding to begin rehabilitating these communities. As of October 1991, sixty houses had been revitalized under the Limited Rental Rehabilitation Program and made available to low-income families. Some Augustans, both black and white, realized that demolition could not replace good law enforcement and civic action in restoring a community. This effort also illustrates the ability of historic preservation to promote the public ideal of providing low and moderate income housing.

The bitter part of this case is that there is support for demolition among some black residents in Augusta's historic neighborhoods. These individuals are willing to sacrifice the resources, if the drug problem leaves with them. But as we learned in Moultrie, the houses leave forever, the drug



dealers simply relocate. The cause for preservation becomes much more difficult when there is dissension amongst the group who might fight to save them.

These five cases illustrate how the lack of knowledge, organization, and representation makes the African American community a passive and unknowing victim of decisions made in the public and private sectors. They also show what is possible when informed people take action on their own behalf. More black communities must take steps similar to those being taken in Columbus, Houston, and Augusta. Finally, these cases point out two further needs. First, more people must become aware that historic black properties do exist and begin to understand why they are important. As an example, a friend who has been a historian and practicing preservationist for many years, stated that he had no knowledge of black historic resources of any kind before taking his current job. Second, we must foster cooperation and closer working relationships between community residents and local officials. In Moultrie and Augusta, everyone held the alleviation of drug dealers as a common interest, but the different groups developed drastically diverse means for achieving this objective.

## Chapter 3

### THE TOOLS OF OPPRESSION

"Deprive a people of its history, and you deprive them both of meaning and identity." Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr."

The ascendance of the African American from slavery toward social equality is among the nation's richest, most important, and dramatic stories. It is also among the most neglected. History, and consequently, historic preservation have not justly treated this aspect of the American saga. In fact, a look at our nation's history reveals a long list of progressively weakened methods used to halt this rise, and thus minimize its importance as reflected in our nation's annals and in the minds of all citizens.

This chapter briefly discusses several of these mechanisms. Collectively, they represent what has been termed Cultural Racism. In context with the definition I presented earlier, cultural racism in America has taken many forms in our history. Over the years, each method has been used, in turn, to maintain the power imbalance between the races through the exploitation of various institutions of power. In addition to sustaining this imbalance, the mechanisms described below have sought to establish an American culture based upon the canons and beliefs of the European settlers who came to the nation's shores after

Columbus. The perpetuation of cultural racism has resulted in several generations of minority Americans who don't know how to situate themselves in today's society. As suggested by the opening quote, the pride of any people is linked to their history, and if that history is erased or negatively skewed, so too is the identity and self-esteem of its posterity.

My reasons for including this chapter are numerous. I first felt it was necessary to highlight some of the tough realities of our history as Americans, because we have a tendency to want to forget that which is unpleasant, and that which we are not proud of. There are some tough lessons to be learned from what has happened in our past, but as lessons, they are valuable and must be acknowledged. Many Americans choose to forget these aspects of the past because they are so displeasing. I describe these tendencies as "black aversion" and "white avoidance." Others may further be indifferent. But however difficult the past is to accept, all must come to grips with it, learn its lessons, and jointly work to counter the forces which would maintain the racial division. No one alive today was a party to the oppression, or a direct victim of it. The guilt of all Americans today is that we allow the manifestations of past misgivings to maintain a foothold in today's society.

Second, I present this historical context for blacks, to say that what we've accomplished as a people is doubly significant in light of the obstacles which have been placed in our paths. We should be proud of the achievements that have been made, and strive to preserve the physical manifestations which keep them fresh in our minds. By bringing the resources together with the history, we can collectively orient ourselves in society, cure the identity crisis, and build upon a foundation laid long ago.

Finally, I present this brief look at African American history to set the stage for the following chapter, where I discuss the movement to revise our nation's history to more accurately reflect the contributions of minorities. I acknowledge that many of these difficulties were not exclusively endured by African Americans (e.g., the lack of education in rural areas) and that all African Americans were not slaves, but since my focus is on the broad black experience in American history, I limit my discussion to these bounds.

### African Americans: A Brief History

The African American struggle for racial equality in America began around 1619, when the first cargo of Negro slaves were sold at Jamestown, Virginia.<sup>a</sup> From this time

<sup>a</sup> Thomas G. Bilbo, Take Your Choice: Separation or

until Emancipation some two-hundred and forty-six years later, whites maintained superiority through domination. Slaves were property, and as such, had no enforceable rights. The chains of slavery were broken with Lincoln's Proclamation and the outcome of the Civil War. The formal end to slavery in the American South marked the beginning of an enduring trend of institutional manipulations, each conceived to sustain the power imbalance and perpetuate beliefs of superiority and inferiority respectively amongst whites and blacks.

Slavery gave way to farm tenancy and "sharecropping" as the U. S. Congress reneged on its promise to redistribute plantation lands amongst the freedmen.<sup>9</sup> Without money, land, or property, African Americans had little to trade outside their labor. Economic disparity and perpetual indebtedness was used to bind blacks to the same lands upon which they toiled as slaves,<sup>10</sup> and to maintain control through paternalism and dependence.

Maintenance of the education gap was perpetuated through both law and custom. During slavery, it was illegal and "dangerous" to teach blacks to read and write. Denial of public funding for schools, teachers, and books also served

Mongrelization, Poplarville, MS Dream House Publishing Co., 1947, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> William D. Baker, "Black Immigration and Settlement," Minority Settlement in the Mississippi River Counties of the Arkansas Delta 1870-1930, October, 1990, p.5.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.6.



to ensure that the rate of black literacy remained low well into the twentieth century. Following the lead of private philanthropists and missionaries, government increasingly began to commit funding and resources to black education.

The segregationist laws of Jim Crow were a third oppressive device put upon society. These laws were contrived by a relative few, but were designed to prey on the fears of the white community, and force them into the role as watch-keepers of the racial divide. In the Jim Crow era, blacks were portrayed as a dangerous subspecies seeking control of the country and enslavement of whites. Blacks were further portrayed as plotters seeking complete social intercourse with whites, and the commingling of the races. Black men were depicted as conspirators plotting to rape or marry white daughters and thereby "mongrelize" Caucasian blood. Oddly enough, these are the very crimes which slave owners imposed upon a people now being accused by their descendents. It was they who gave birth to mulattoes and racial castes in America.

"Back-to-Africa" campaigns and mass immigration schemes respectively represented movements with the black and white communities to separate the races. Noted blacks such as Marcus Garvey and Henry McNeal Turner devised plans to move blacks back to the "mother country." From Emancipation

through the Civil Rights Movement, race relations, formerly termed by many as "the Negro problem," has often been called the most serious domestic problem facing America. Presidents from Jefferson to Grant sought land in Africa to which blacks might be sent.<sup>11</sup> Thomas Jefferson, father of the Declaration of Independence and author of the soaring words, "We hold these truths to be self evident that all men are created equal," was himself a slave-owner. Even "The Great Emancipator," as history terms Abraham Lincoln, believed that the races could not live together as equals. In a speech delivered at Charleston, Illinois on September 18, 1858, Lincoln stated, "I will say, then, that I am not, nor have I ever been, in favor of bringing about the social and political equality of the black and white races - and I will say in addition to this that there is a physical difference between the races which I believe forever forbid the two living together on terms of equality, and inasmuch as they cannot live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I, as much as any other man, am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race."<sup>12</sup>

Many social scientists further argue that the welfare system has been used as a purposeful device to control

<sup>11</sup> Thomas G. Bilbo, Take Your Choice: Separation or Mongrelization, Poplarville, MS Dream House Publishing Co., 1947, p. 6.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

people. In the context of this chapter, it might also be viewed a tool of oppression. In their book Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare, Frances Piven and Richard Cloward suggest that the public relief system is an intentional mechanism used to control the poor.<sup>13</sup> Because blacks are disproportionately represented among the poor, they also comprise a disproportionately large percentage of welfare recipients. In this scenario, public assistance can be viewed as a mechanism used to keep a large number of blacks idle, complacent, and relatively content with low, unthreatening positions in society. Whether or not the purpose was intentional as conceived, the fact is that many blacks become helplessly dependent on public assistance, and remain so without the desire or wherewithal to seek to advance themselves, or the belief that they can.

Literacy and interpretation tests permitted denial of African American suffrage in the deep South into the mid 1960's. Today congressional redistricting plans seek to discount the hard won power of the black vote. Supremacy movements, persecution, violence, and control of written history have also been used to prevent blacks from obtaining equality, institutional power, and an accurate portrayal in history. The devices of oppression have succeeded in keeping

<sup>13</sup> Piven, Frances Fox and Cloward, Richard, "Relief, Labor and Civil Disorder," Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare, (New York: Random House), 1978, p.3.

American society split along racial lines, unfairly distributing resources and power, and effectively taking pride, dignity, and identity away from most African Americans. The tools have hurt the whole of society, in that the hope of fostering knowledge and understanding is reduced, making the races increasingly more ignorant of each other. The potential for racial harmony is replaced by suspicion, distrust, prejudice, and in severe cases, hatred and violence.

The element of promise in this brief review is the fact that past oppressive devices have been, at every turn, met with some form of resistance, and there is hope that the current manifestations can also be successfully countered. As they've changed form, each tool has become weaker than the one before it in its capacity to hold a people down. Despite the earnest efforts of detractors, the races are increasing their interaction, and learning to understand and appreciate each other.

Racial prejudice is by no means gone from society. It is however being carried out in a less direct manner, with more focus being placed on differences in economic and social status and less on differences in color. The chameleon of American history has altered its form again. Current



manifestations include withholding public and private investment from poor neighborhoods, discriminatory zoning practices, tacit racial steering in real estate, financial "red-lining" by banks and commercial investors, and selective enforcement of tax delinquency, laws, and city codes to clear the way for gentrification or new development in historic inner-city areas. These newer tools, though troublesome, are now recognized for what they are, and are being met with resistance as were their predecessors. Planners and politicians have often been knowing and willing participants in these crimes. At other times these policy makers are unwitting actors. Planners and politicians can be, and often are a vital force in limiting the effectiveness of these more recent oppressive mechanisms, by helping minority communities increase their capacity to oppose them. In Chapter Seven, I further discuss preservation of African American resources as it applies to planning and politics.

Finally, we must remember that discrimination and prejudice are not inborn, they are learned, and in fact, taught. Possibly through teaching a revised version of history, we can begin to prepare our children to understand and appreciate each other, and to treat all people equally. The History Revision Movement is the subject of Chapter Four.



## CHAPTER 4

### HISTORY AND THE REVISIONIST MOVEMENT

History is not the sum of all past events. It is the story we tell ourselves about what happened in the past. And the story can only have meaning if it helps to explain what is happening to us in the present. That is why each generation must rewrite history--and that is why history is so full of conflict.<sup>14</sup>

In her article, "Conflict and Compassion in Considering the Past," Rhoda Gilman points out the fact that history is a chorus of voices, a conversation, and not the lecture that we have all received. This chapter describes the rising movement in this nation to add dialogue to American history. Our history has largely been told from one perspective, at the expense of all others. Since history is interpretation as well as documented fact, it follows that the most accurate portrayal can best be gleaned from considering a number of different perspectives.

I received the inspiration to include this topic from watching the November 26, 1991 episode of the Ron Reagan Show. The subject of the airing was the History Revisionist Movement, and several notable guests were featured. These included Dr. Gary Nash, author and professor at UCLA, Mr. Frank Dowalter, chairman of the Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Celebration Committee, Jan Elliott of the

<sup>14</sup> Gilman, Rhoda R., "Conflict and Compassion in Considering the Past," The Minnesota History Interpreter, Vol. XIX, no. 3, June, 1991, p.1.

Committee for American Indian History, and Dr. Maulana Karenga, historian at California State University-Long Beach. The participants debated the accuracy of history in crediting Columbus with the discovery of the New World, and used this as a point of departure for further examination of the nation's history. Mr. Dowalter conceded that others arrived in America before Columbus, and that there were natives here when the Spanish ships arrived. The reason Columbus is recognized, he contended, is that it was his voyage that sparked the masses to come, and thus, established the foundation for the evolution of western civilization.<sup>15</sup> The others associated the start of imperialism and minority oppression with Columbus' arrival. When the Europeans came, they seized control of life in the New World, and then largely wrote its history. Thus, American history glorifies the courageous exploits of the colonists and trailblazers who are credited with having carved the greatest nation in the world out of a wilderness. It is undisputable that the settlers were the primary architects of America as we know it today, but is also irrefutable that African Americans were involved in every phase of the nation's development, including exploration, settlement and construction. Little attention in history is given to the African American for his

<sup>15</sup> "The History Revisionist Movement," The Ron Reagan Show, November 26, 1991.

role, or to the Native American who was uprooted from the land upon which we built. Few are aware that it was mostly black cowboys who drove cattle up the Chisholm Trail because the work was hard and dirty, or that a black man discovered New Mexico.<sup>16</sup> American history has also deftly omitted or glossed over the misdeeds of its colonizers, and depicts them as heroes in almost every regard. Native and African Americans are often rendered as savages, needing first to be vanquished, and then paternally cared for by the great white settler.

These accounts of history have been perpetuated through folklore, written history, Hollywood, and most important to my central thesis, the monuments and structures which we preserve for future generations. The images they foster are so impressed upon us that we begin to accept, without question, that this must be the way in which things happened. With this in mind, most Americans should, as I did, find it unthinkable that President Lincoln would utter the discriminatory words attributed to him in the previous chapter.

At the grassroots level, the Revisionist Movement has taken the early form of school protests. Some minority schools currently refuse to use standard history texts. One

<sup>16</sup> Williamson, Fredrick C., "On Rediscovering America," Final Report: Minority Participation in State Programs National Conference of State Preservation Officers, March, 1991, p. 2.

of the panelists on the television program cited the Oakland school system as a pioneer in this boycott of history.<sup>17</sup> Many minority parents in Oakland were said to feel that popular American history teaches children of color that their ancestors did little of historical significance, and offers very few positive role models with which they can readily identify. All this comes at a time when minority youth are desperately in need of positive role models and an understanding of where they mesh into the larger fabric of society. They must first know where they are and where their forebears have been, before they can begin to move forward and chart their own destinies.

The movement is gaining momentum across the country as school children are being taught American history in terms of who was oppressed, excluded, or otherwise mistreated by whom. They are learning a revised version of history which emphasizes the ethnic diversity of America, how this heterogeneous society evolved, and how each culture is valuable in its own right and deserving of study and respect. It depicts the multifarious nature of American society as a national treasure, and not a domestic problem as it has historically been treated.

This movement is important because what we learn in

<sup>17</sup> "The History Revisionist Movement," The Ron Reagan Show, November 26, 1991.



school profoundly affects our impressions of what is important and valuable to us in society. To understand that the modest artifacts of African American heritage are as vital to the telling of the American saga as are the magnificent buildings of white culture, requires a retelling of history. Simply knowing that black labor even laid the cornerstones of many of these great buildings can serve to inject a greater sense of pride and contribution into this people.

The Invisible Hands project in Macon, Georgia provides a good example. It traces the role of African American craftsmen in the building of some of Macon's notable architecture. The research identified over 400 black artisans who helped design and build many of the structures. The travelling exhibit is currently in the Southeast, where it is helping to add flesh and blood, bone and sinew, and yes, color, to the invisible hands, for all who see it.

There is much for all Americans to learn from the popular version of our history. In response to the Oakland boycott, one must ask, Is no history better than a skewed history, or is a history slanted in the other direction any better than that which we have all been taught? In both cases, I think not. I believe that there is room for each of this nation's



ethnic groups to maintain their individual identities, and have room left over to mutually build core values and institutions which identify us all as Americans. As Toni Lee points out in The American Mosaic, "America will always to some extent be a nation of many subcultures, which comprise in the aggregate, an American identity.

Only an interactive telling of history can accomplish a realistic account of the American experience. On the television program, Dr. Karenga argued that whites established American history before calling everyone else to the table. In this scenario, there is no room for give and take. If we view history as a form of property, it must henceforth be held in common and not in the hands of a mere few. We must share the responsibility of ownership.

## CHAPTER 5

### PERCEIVED BARRIERS TO GREATER PARTICIPATION

In this chapter, I discuss the perceived barriers which preclude greater participation by African Americans in the historic preservation movement. This discussion reflects the responses given by state preservation professionals to the questions presented below. Eight of the eleven states provided input.

(1) What do you perceive as the barriers to greater participation by African Americans in historic preservation?

- (a) The perceptions of whites that black communities are dangerous.
- (b) Lack of initiative by blacks.
- (c) The absence of unity in the black community in terms of the value placed upon the preservation of delapidated housing.
- (d) Misconceptions by whites and blacks as to what is historically important.
- (e) Discrimination and prejudice.

(2) What obstacles prevent your office from doing more?

(a) Staff and budget constraints.

(b) Difficulty in recruiting minority professionals.

(c) Lack of recognition by African Americans that historic preservation is important to them.

(d) Discrimination and prejudice.

(e) The general lack of serious consideration given historic preservation (in general) by comprehensive planners.

Two respondents felt that the perception of whites that black neighborhoods are dangerous is a barrier to greater participation by African Americans. There is no doubt that drugs and crime have become major social challenges for the black community, but these evils are not only in the black community, they are everywhere. They're society's problems. Running from them or turning our backs only allow these ills to fester. Preservation can be an effective weapon against these problems as is being evidenced in Augusta, GA (see page 51). A community with pride and a cause can come together to challenge criminals and drug abusers for control of their neighborhoods. Historic preservation can serve as the purpose. The knowledge that their homes are historically

important, teamed with professional preservation assistance, access to funding, and good law enforcement can make a difference.

Half those polled suggested that there is a lack of interest and initiative among blacks. I cannot attest to whether this is true or not, but I have put the question to several blacks who are active in preservation. Some say that they have succeeded on several accounts in increasing interest and enterprise in their communities. Others spoke of black disillusionment with a system they feel does not have their best interests at heart. Others say that some blacks have an aversion to history because of the dark specter of slavery. The distrust and aversion can be addressed through education as I will discuss in Chapter Six. More African Americans can be persuaded to join the historic preservation movement as was witnessed through my contacts, when the connection is made between the resources and cultural identity.

Two respondents stated that African Americans are often divided on whether their communities should or should not be saved. So many of the valuable resources are in deteriorated inner-city areas. Understandably, the residents here want standard housing and safe communities for their families. Some however, are willing to see it all torn down and

replaced with a public housing project. The resulting division allows proponents of new development to convince a portion of neighborhood residents into abandoning their homes, and consequently, weakens the unified front. Often times, these individuals are not aware that there is another alternative; that there are programs and resources that can help them improve and restore their present homes. Believing that they have only one alternative, many sadly succumb to inducements as was the case in Moultrie (page 45).

Misconceptions as to what qualifies as historically significant was also an often cited cause. I mentioned earlier that this is largely a result of the skewed manner in which we have been taught about the nation's history. We can also begin to redress this problem through education.

Only two respondents actually stated that low black participation was in part caused by discrimination and prejudice. This problem is even more pervasive in private preservation where there are no equal employment opportunity requirements. All know that discrimination is a significant and very real barrier. It is also one that neither race can bring down alone. It must be dismantled from both sides much as the world has witnessed the recent take down of the Berlin Wall. As more whites and blacks come together on the middle ground, fewer and fewer staunch opponents will be left at



either end. Understanding is the precursor, which is also achieved through education.

In response to why state offices aren't doing more, the predominant answer was staff and funding shortages. Budget crises have been a pervasive problem at all levels of government in recent years and there is no sign that the condition will soon improve. This signifies that black communities and individual professionals must come forward to take African American preservation into their own care, lest it fall into total neglect. Much of the work can and should be done by the direct beneficiaries. Examples include gathering historical facts, documents and deeds, preparing historic context reports, taking pictures, and surveying buildings and structures. Most, if not all state and local preservation offices offer information and technical advice which allow lay-people to successfully perform most of these tasks.

Lack of resources, on the other hand, can be used as an easy excuse. A state office can simply say that they have insufficient staff and resources, and that every dollar is tied up in vital programs. Some state preservation officials gave the impression that their offices were simply unwilling to commit limited resources to what they felt should be accomplished, or at least initiated, by blacks for

themselves. These individuals said that their offices are willing to support community-based efforts in any way they can. Other state preservationists felt that a larger portion of state resources should be devoted to minority preservation to compensate for past oversight, but the decision to take this action is beyond their control. Within this context, African Americans cannot afford to wait and see if government will do more.

Difficulty in recruiting minority professionals was identified as a factor limiting action at the state level. As was shown in Chapter One, there are very few blacks working professionally at the state level to advocate for the preservation of their culture's historic resources. Without this voice, African American historic preservation may never receive the attention it so richly deserves. The NCSHPO plan to target black colleges is one way of addressing professional underrepresentation.

A final barrier cited was the general lack of serious consideration given historic preservation in comprehensive planning. African American preservation has suffered in this regard because the larger movement has suffered. Long viewed as a impediment to growth, preservation was a menace to be fought, or at best, tolerated. Many planners and local politicians never saw the field an effective tool to be put

to use in support of their goals, in addition to holding some of the discriminatory views I discussed earlier. This presents a double negative for the cause of African American historic preservation.

We are beginning to bridge the information gap. Today, more public servants realize that historic preservation is not only not a hindrance, but is in fact one of the most viable strategies for revitalizing neighborhoods and downtowns, providing affordable housing and jobs, sparking economic development and tourism, adding interest and scenic variety to our townscapes, and generally improving the quality of life for all.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE ROLE OF EDUCATION

I sincerely believe that education is the key to most of the problems and issues raised in this paper. . In Chapter One, I talked about the lack of minority professionals in state offices and underrepresentation on the National Register. Education is the answer. Chapter Two provided case examples of how important African American resources have been lost and damaged. Education can prevent this from happening again. In Chapter Three, I discussed the mechanisms of oppression which have skewed history and the relationship between the races. Education can help blacks rediscover their identity and teach both races to live together and understand and respect each other. Through education, the different cultures of America can together amend written history as discussed in Chapter Four. Education can remove the perceived barriers of Chapter Five, which currently preclude more blacks from participating in the historic preservation movement. Education is the first and most vital step in changing perception as well as reality.

For the remainder of this chapter, I shall present short extracts of model initiatives in the southern states designed to address these problems. Due to space limitations, I could not present them all, and I apologize to the program administrators if there are any significant omissions. For those states which did not respond to my survey, I refer to the NCSHPO Final Report for pertinent information. I could not provide information for those states which did not respond to either survey.

#### Alabama<sup>18</sup>

The Alabama Black Heritage Council (ABHC) is acknowledged as the pioneering attempt (among the states polled) to formally organize a body of people to address historic preservation in the black community. The ABHC is largely a professional group consisting of congressional district representatives, a member of the state historical commission, and leading area educators from black colleges.

The ABHC works with church organizations, schools, and community groups to spread awareness, and acts as a technical advisor and conduit for National Register nominations. As such this initiative targets underrepresentation on the NRHP. It further spreads awareness in the black community about the

<sup>18</sup> Final Report: Minority Participation in State Programs  
National Conference of State Preservation Officers, March,  
1991, p. 6.



value of their cultural resources, which allows preventive action to be taken against further property destruction. It also opens an avenue to African Americans at the collegiate level, which should attract more professional representation. The state further produced education materials such as a slide program on cultural heritage, a calendar of historic black churches entitled "Keepers of the Faith," and a historic sites tour book. These materials can help fight the barriers discussed in the previous chapter by educating blacks and whites on the cultural contributions of blacks in Alabama.

Arkansas<sup>19</sup> A comprehensive historic context document was completed in October of 1990, which details minority settlement patterns in the Mississippi River counties within the state. The document addresses Italian Americans, German Americans, and Chinese Americans in addition to African Americans. The effort has led to several National Register nominations, and as such, addresses the problem of underrepresentation on the NRHP. It also establishes the foundation for further surveys and nominations and can be used for educational purposes.

<sup>19</sup> William D. Baker, "Society and Culture in Arkansas," Minority Settlement in the Mississippi River Counties of the Arkansas Delta 1870-1930, October, 1990, p.5.

Florida<sup>20</sup> The creation of the Study Commission on African American Heritage in Florida (SCAAHF) represents the only organization established by a legislative body among the states polled. The SCAHMF was constituted during the 1990 regular session as a result of a house bill sponsored by a team of state representatives. Prominent blacks from around the state, including preservation officials and political leaders, are represented among the membership. The nine members of the SCAAHF are appointed three each by the governor, senate president, and house speaker. Their four responsibilities are: (1) study ways to establish a Black Heritage Trail in Florida, (2) integrate African American history into state textbooks, (3) plan ways to include black heritage in Florida's Quincentenary Celebration, and (4) determine the best means to preserve the state's African American history.

Unlike the ABHC and the MHPC, the SCAAHF is a study commission and not an action group. As such it has appointed subcommittees to carry out specific actions. Two such bodies are currently working on the heritage trail project and the integration of African American history into school curricula. The Black Heritage Trail guidebook is scheduled for release in March, 1992.

<sup>20</sup> Study Commission on African-American History in Florida, Report and Recommendations to the Governor, Legislature of Florida, and Department of Education, June 1, 1991, pp. 1-12.

Although most of the action programs are still in their formative stages, Florida's black heritage legislation is a model effort. By establishing SCAAHF in law, this state has succeeded in marrying preservation and politics. As Georgia representative Michael Thurmond of Athens stated during a recent speech to the Georgia Network for Minority Preservation, "African Americans must politicize historic preservation,"<sup>21</sup> referring to the fact that much of the power over our built environment is wielded by politicians. The state Department of Education is also an implied player, which adds another vital element to what should prove to be a very effective state program in the years to come. Once The SCAAHF's recommendations have been acted upon, the state will be in a position to address all the problems I delineated at the start of this chapter.

Georgia Having worked in this office, I am most familiar with this state's African American program initiatives. In fact, the position I held and the major project upon which I devoted most my time, resulted from two such undertakings. The state's first major effort was the development of Historic Black Resources (1984), a handbook designed to assist in the identification, documentation, and evaluation

<sup>21</sup> Annual Meeting, Network for Minority Preservation, Savannah, GA, October 2, 1991.

of historic African American properties in the state. This effort was the culmination of several years of research and foundation work.

In January, 1990, OHP created the Minority Historic Preservation Committee through its National Register Review Board. Since its inception, the MHPC has completed a number of projects geared toward awareness and education. Some members of the MHPC were also involved in rehabilitation projects before helping establish the Committee. Several members are also currently overseeing active projects, while lending organizational support to many others. Last February, they produced and distributed a series of four posters highlighting historic houses, schools, churches, and community buildings. A framed set was presented to the governor during Black History Month and occupied a place of honor in the state Capitol Rotunda. They have since been distributed statewide to schools, universities, libraries, civic groups, public offices, museums, and individuals. Requests are still coming in a year after their first being distributed.

The latest public awareness project is a tourism brochure made public release in February, 1992. This project will contain pictures and descriptions of fifty-eight African American historic properties in Georgia listed on the



National Register. By placing them in Georgia's eleven visitor centers, OHP and the MHPC hope to spread awareness among black and white Georgians (and others) and encourage people to actually visit the sites. The state is hopeful that the product will boost tourism. The brochure, entitled Preserving the Legacy, will also receive the same distribution as did the posters.

I believe one further effort in the state deserves mention. The King-Tisdell Foundation, a private black heritage organization in Savannah, GA, recently succeeded in getting an artist's rendering of the Beach Institute on the cover of Southern Bell's 1992 local area directory. The Institute, which is the state's oldest African American education center, will grace 226,000 phone books.<sup>22</sup> Through this simple deed, black heritage preservation in Savannah will reach across racial lines into all homes, and provide much needed publicity for the cause. Having said all this, Georgia's model efforts are currently making a difference with respect to all the problems and barriers discussed above, with the possible exception of professional representation. I hope to help bridge this gap myself by working with black schools and by providing copies of this paper to a number of organizations and institutions.

<sup>22</sup> "Beach Institute Graces New Phone Book," Savannah Press, October 23, 1991, p. 1A.



Hopefully more black collegians will be inspired to the cause by the challenges I present here, or choose to conduct research beyond my own.

Louisiana Program initiatives in this state appeared to be in the planning phase, and thus no specifics were available. Hopefully some of the initiatives put forth by other states will be helpful to Louisiana in its future efforts.

North Carolina Most of the efforts to preserve African American resources in North Carolina appear as individual project efforts which have been funded, or otherwise supported, by the State Historic Preservation Office. A notable example is the Somerset Place Foundation, Inc., an organization seeking to interpret and preserve the history, culture, and heritage of the African and African American people who contributed to the development of a plantation near Creswell, N. C.<sup>23</sup> Dorothy Spruill Redford, a staff member and descendant of Somerset Place, was responsible for arranging a nationally acclaimed reunion of Somerset's descendants in 1986. Ms. Redford's book, entitled Somerset Homecoming, documents her quest to discover the roots of the plantation and the process through which this effort

<sup>23</sup> Lloyd Childers, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, letter to Dr. Elizabeth Lyon, January 30, 1990, p.1.

culminated in the reunion of 2000 black and white descendants.<sup>24</sup>

A great deal of early African American history is linked to the plantations of the South, and here is a good place to start uncovering some of it. North Carolina acknowledges that little effort has been expended towards nominating minority resources as a separate theme,<sup>25</sup> which seems applicable to most of the states I surveyed. This would indicate that many more African American resources could be identified if specific efforts were geared towards this end. It further suggests that a great many National Register listings are at least indirectly linked to black heritage, and that this should be more clearly acknowledged. National Register files in North Carolina, for example, show 176 black-related properties,<sup>26</sup> while the printout used to prepare the tables in Chapter One only recognizes forty-six. The stigma associated with plantation life may be unpleasant for people to remember, yet again, it represents a truth in history which must be accepted by both races. The disagreeable episodes of history cannot be laundered away like dirt, nor should they be held long after these events, as a reason to hate or distrust. As one author puts it, "History is full of hard issues. History that never raises

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> North Carolina Historic Preservation Office, Minority Preservation Issues, January, 1990, p.3.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

the buried questions, and refuses to look at the dark underside is a history that is already dead.<sup>27</sup> Black aversion and white avoidance must therefore be overcome for the good of common understanding and acceptance of American history for what it was. Both sides of the story must be told as one, in order to achieve a realistic account of what actually happened.

Furthermore, the accomplishments of Ms. Dorothy Spruill Redford and the Somerset Place Foundation, Inc., represent an exemplary achievement. Somerset Homecoming gloriously illustrates that black and white Americans can come together to rediscover a past that is inextricably linked. Acknowledgement and acceptance of this common past is the first step toward realizing that the destinies of the races are likewise bound, and that we must work together to make it fruitful for all Americans.

Although North Carolina has yet to establish dedicated programs and initiatives to address the preservation of African American cultural resources, the state ranked second in total properties successfully nominated to the National Register (Chapter One). It has further instituted a Commission on Indian Affairs, which is a stride toward full acknowledgement of another important minority group in this

<sup>27</sup> "The History Revisionist Movement," The Ron Reagan Show, November 26, 1991.

country. As such, their efforts directly address underrepresentation on the National Register, and begin to break down some of the perceived barriers to racial acceptance.

South Carolina This state's efforts have also been directed primarily at individual nominations to the National Register and towards financial support. South Carolina, like Georgia, has also appointed African American representatives to its NRRB. In Chapter One, I noted that South Carolina had the greatest number of historic black properties on its National Register list. This state also was noted for having the two properties with the earliest historical significance in the Stone River Slave Rebellion Site and the Dafuskie Island Historic District.

These achievements are noteworthy, but do not necessarily indicate that South Carolina is more conscious of the need to recognize African American resources than are the other states. South Carolina's efforts to date primarily address the problem of underrepresentation on the National Register.

Tennessee Tennessee did not respond to either survey.

Texas Efforts in Texas are focused on financial assistance

in the form of grants. Minority outreach is accomplished at the local level through the Certified Local Government (CLG) Program. The CLG program is a federal initiative designed to provide financial incentives to cities and counties that adopt a preservation ordinance, survey and document historic properties in their jurisdictions, and coordinate their preservation activities with higher government. As it is a federal program, all the other states also have a CLG program. The program is not compulsory for municipalities, nor does it make any special provisions for African American or other minority resources.

A representative of the Texas Historical Commission stated that their office actively solicits proposals from minority communities, and funds surveys and National Register nominations for potential sites. No specific initiatives were offered.

Virginia Special survey and National Register initiatives were also reported as the primary way in which Virginia seeks to preserve its African American heritage. The state is also in the process of developing a publication highlighting the properties which are currently on the Register. The document is planned to serve as a promotional and educational tool.

The information I was able to gather for this paper



indicates that, among these states, Georgia and Alabama currently have the most developed programs for heightening African American participation and representation in the field of historic preservation. As I noted above, Florida has also taken the preliminary steps required to establish a good program.

Some states have taken significant first steps in expanding their preservation programs to include the minority community. Most others, while having done less to date, expressed that they intend to intensify their effort in the future in accordance with the recommendations of the NCSHPO Task Force Report. It should be acknowledged that it takes a considerable amount of time to establish the groundwork for a successful program. The first visible effort in Georgia, for example, was the Black Resources Handbook completed in 1984, but actual planning began many years before.

I should also say here that cultural diversity, as just one aspect of historic preservation, is still a recent endeavor in relative terms. The boundaries of what the mainstream preservation movement recognizes as potentially historic, is constantly expanding. In this scenario, the modest state of African American preservation today can be likened to earlier struggles to gain recognition for other classes of resources, and must, by necessity, run its course.

Rural preservation in the recent past, and historic landscapes at present, are other preservation issues still at relatively early stages of action and broad-based acceptance.

## CHAPTER 7

### PRESERVATION, POLITICS, AND PLANNING

Although the professions of historic preservation, politics, and planning have shared goals, historically they have not viewed themselves as a team. While each seeks to serve the public interest and enhance the communities in which we live, politicians often equate community improvement with growth and new development, while preservationists look to the cultural richness, history, and aesthetics associated with enduring resources. Planners are typically split between the two camps, most being in the former due to the profession's inherent association with politics.

Untold numbers of important historic resources have been needlessly lost to growth. Politicians, often with the advice and support of planners, paved the way for many new projects right through historic areas. African American communities have been particularly hard hit since they often lack understanding of the political and planning processes, knowledge of their local history, needed organization, unity, community activism, resources, and other resources needed to effectively fight for preservation. New development has thus

followed the path of least resistance though black neighborhoods. Urban renewal, new highways, drug and crime removal, paternalistic goodwill, private gain, and indifference were some of the motives. Minimal [public] service provision, the property tax, selective code enforcement, rezonings, and promises of new housing were among the means. Destruction of neighborhoods, displacement, gentrification, and loss of cultural heritage and identity have been the outcomes.

There are, of course, exceptions to what I have portrayed as a long term adversarial relationship between historic preservation, politics, and planning. Charleston, SC and Savannah, GA have long realized that preservation and development are both requisites of a thriving and livable community. These places have shown that new buildings can be designed to blend well with, and actually complement historic resources. More important in terms with this paper, these cities also illustrate that historic preservation is a valuable tool for promoting a number of public goals, including affordable housing, downtown and community revitalization, economic development, tourism, and even environmental protection. Historic preservation is vital to minority neighborhoods for many of the reasons I've just cited. Additionally, it can mean jobs, renewed community

pride, discovery of forgotten treasures, and even physical salvation in some cases. Preservation can open doors to funding, technical assistance, media exposure, and through Section 106 and local district regulation, protection against development pressures.

Recent trends show that policy makers and planners are responding to historic preservation and realizing its potential to promote public objectives. The Georgia Planning Act of 1989 serves as just one example of where preservation has become a mandatory component of the comprehensive planning process. As historic preservation gains a place at the planning table, and cultural diversity gains wider acceptance in preservation circles, the cause for saving African American resources will be greatly enhanced.

Planning and politics can be valuable assets to the African American cause, much as they have knowingly or unknowingly injured it in the past. Politicians can draft and propose targeted legislation, lobby for a more equitable distribution of public funds, provide support from influential positions, and help carry issues to broader constituencies and to the media. Planners can help facilitate the establishment of grassroots organizations, provide advice on a number public policy issues, teach individuals how to work through government to effect change,



suggest options and defenses against development pressure, propose changes to particularly harmful and insensitive ordinances, carry the flag of advocacy (in true Davidoff fashion), and act as a point of reference for further needs and assistance.

## CHAPTER 8

### A FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE

In Chapter Five, I offered several perceptions given by preservationists as to why more African Americans are not involved in the historic preservation movement. A recurring response from whites was that blacks are apathetic and disinterested in preservation. Blacks repeatedly stated that historic preservation is a leisure activity and symbol of status for whites. The past track record of African Americans in history and historic preservation does seem to support this conjecture, but I don't believe that either perception is wholly correct. Many African Americans have yet to fully realize how historic preservation can be used to promote some of their social goals, nor have they had the funding, technical resources, procedural knowledge, or general acceptance from a movement which is, at the present, largely white.

Whites who believe that blacks are disinterested in preservation must temper this view with social reality. As I said earlier, blacks are disproportionately represented among the poor. It is less a matter of their being disinterested in historic preservation as it is a matter of being more

concerned with the basic necessities of life and comfortable existence. Preservation for them, is low on the priority list.

Throughout this paper though, I've also spoken of a loss of black pride and identity, a loss which I feel can be uncovered through heritage preservation. The sense of place is a powerful thing. As Georgia governor Zell Miller said at a recent black history celebration, "If we can stand in the very place where history happened, if we can walk the same paths our heros once walked, and look out of the same windows through which they once looked, history comes alive. It enriches our understanding of what it must have been like for our forebears, and weaves our heritage into our daily lives in a tangible way. In this light, African American heritage preservation becomes more of a need and less of a unaffordable luxury. It is the key which gives all people a sense of connection with their heritage, and hence an identity. Still, in the case of the poor, historic preservation will be a hard sell, but we must not give up.

Over the past several years, we have witnessed a proliferation in public and private activity to focus more effort upon the recognition of historic resources associated with minority cultures. This represents a widening of the door to historic preservation for blacks and others.

Concurrent emphasis is being placed on a reassessment of the role of Native Americans and African Americans in history, and the urgent need to revise our nation's annals.

With these trends moving forward at an ever increasing pace, the time is ripe for more African Americans to become active participants in historic preservation. I say this with the full knowledge that many blacks are not yet ready or willing to get involved because they are engaged in more primal pursuits. But I also do not accept as fact, that the African American community, at large, will always remain poor. I believe that a balanced investment should be made now as the opportunity to participate increasingly manifests itself. I also realize that the door of acceptance is not open everywhere, however we must start somewhere. Increased participation and acceptance will necessarily be an evolutionary process, as it always is in social interaction.

The point of this chapter is to lay out a framework through which the African American community can begin to take the lead in preserving and protecting its cultural heritage. Here, I discuss what can and should be done independently by blacks, and what assistance should come from planners, politicians, and state, local, and private preservation organizations. I further argue that the brokering role, as far as large scale participation is

concerned, must be taken by those African Americans with the capacity to do so.

Such individuals include black planners, politicians, educators, preservationists, community leaders and others. In the states which have made strides in African American heritage preservation, most of the impetus has come from government and private sources. Blacks must accept this responsibility because it is the recognition of black heritage that is at stake. Leaders in the African American community must step forward. As planners, they can help others understand the planning process and how government works. As politicians, they can influence others in high circles to invest in this vital cause. As educators, they can share the message so that others might be enlightened. And as preservationists (few at present), they can provide information, assistance, and reassurance that heritage preservation is for everyone.

Where then do we start? The first task is to spread awareness about the resources. This is the aim of the educational materials discussed as state initiatives in Chapter Six. We must put these resources in the hands of our educators, and then go beyond existing materials to develop more. Black leaders, such as the professionals I listed above, must work to form alliances with the three support



communities listed below from their respective positions in society.

In the following pages, I enumerate the roles to be played by four major groups of actors. These are: 1) the African American community, 2) the preservation community, 3) the planning community, and 4) the political community. I conclude the chapter with a short discussion of how the major groups must interact to achieve a reversal of the major problem presented in Chapter One.

#### African American Community:

People: Role players in the African American community include, first of all, practicing preservation professionals. There are a few such people currently working at all levels of government and in the private sector. As such, they have a direct and very obvious role to play as advocates in a general sense, and technical assistance providers on a case-by-case basis. Next would be the non-professionals working in preservation offices. In Chapter One, I showed that African Americans and other minorities represent a large portion of the administrative staffs in these offices. During years of work here, these individuals are likely to have learned the inner workings of the various preservation programs available in their respective states. I suspect the

same is true at other levels of government also. They can provide information about the programs and how to access them, refer inquiries to professionals for technical advice, and join private preservation organizations (and encourage others to do so) among other things.

Another key player in the black community is political figures. The political process, to a large extent, shapes society. In short, political figures play a major role in deciding where public investment will go, and where it will not. African American heritage preservation must be politicized through public policy debate if it is ever to ever gain widespread acceptance as an important issue. In Georgia, we have succeeded in getting this issue on the agenda of the Legislative Black Caucus, which is planning to introduce legislation to fund specific projects. The Georgia governor has also spoken on behalf of African American heritage preservation on at least two occasions.

Local politics is one of the most potent power bases in the African American community. Blacks currently occupy the mayor's office in major cities such as Los Angeles, New York, Detroit, Cleveland, and Atlanta. Blacks are also represented on City Councils, state legislatures, and on Capitol Hill. At the federal level, for example, there are currently twenty-six African American legislators in Congress<sup>28</sup>. These public

<sup>28</sup> Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, "The

servants should use their influential positions to elevate this issue within the chambers of government, and to seek needed funding for specific projects and expansion of the education campaign.

African American historians, professors, teachers, and other education professionals, are vital links for their knowledge and skill in uncovering obscured history. They are also in the position to enlighten and inspire so many others, once they themselves are committed to the cause and are armed with teaching materials. African Americans in education-related professions are in the unique position to elevate this cause in the minds and souls of people. Community leaders, church groups, neighborhood organizations, and private individuals are the last and most important players in the black community. They represent the mass of potential activism which has lain dormant with respect to historic preservation for so long. Most preservationists would agree that the initiative must start at the grassroots level.

Resources: The most valuable resource in the African American community is again, the people. Their sheer numbers represent a force that can be assembled to achieve a variety of beneficial actions, some of which are listed below. A second resource is the political and institutional contacts

Long Road up the Hill: African Americans in the U.S. Congress, 1870-1990."

achievable through the various players. Financial self-help through intra-community philanthropy and fund-raising is a third resource.

Actions: Below is a list of actions that African Americans must undertake in the quest for the preservation of their heritage. Some of these actions are inter-related and dependent upon actions being taken by one or more of the other participants.

1. Take the initiative. Form community-based organizations (or work through those that already exist). This a a good forum through which preservation education can be provided at the grassroots level. Neighborhood groups also provide order and cohesiveness for other needs such as gathering historical documentation for the community, or mounting united opposition to a threat.
2. Tie into local and state preservation organizations. Inquire into the existence of minority programs. Volunteer to be a part of any on-going activity or to help set up activities where they do not already exist.
3. Seek funding for individual and group preservation activities through government programs, community fund-raising, private philanthropy, and any other source available.

4. Work with preservation agencies and others to develop educational materials and vehicles for distributing them to the public. This paper has cited a number of such examples, such as the Black Heritage Trail guide book in Florida, the historic black churches calendar in Alabama, and the black heritage poster series in Georgia. Schools, museums, libraries, tourism bureaus, and a number of other interests have shown a great deal of enthusiasm for such educational resources.

5. Perform preliminary field investigation to identify potential historic structures. Initiate documentation to include taking photos and compiling site specific information for review by the state preservation office. Again, most if not all state offices publish guidelines for conducting this work. Once potential resources have been verified, state (or local) preservation officials may then visit the sites to perform a detailed survey, or make funding available (on a competitive basis) for private consultant support. This step represents a pro-active approach. A great deal of preservation activity, African American or otherwise, has come in reaction to a particular threat. So many times in the past, the reaction has come to late.

7. Raise the level of awareness and responsibility within the African American community. This includes students at



all levels. There is no doubt that blacks are both proud of and interested in their cultural heritage. What may be lacking in terms of my focus, is awareness of the linkage between that history and the physical resources which testify to it and keep it alive.

8. Black colleges and universities must meet the state preservation agencies halfway in its attempt to recruit more African Americans into the field. In its Final Report, the NCSHPO pledged set up programs designed to increase student and faculty awareness of career opportunities in the field of preservation.<sup>29</sup> Objectives include sending recruiters to the campuses, mailing information packets, setting up scholarships and internships, and establishing fund-raising mechanisms. Another important effort should be to tie high schools into the program to develop and nurture preservation interest prior to the collegiate level.

9. Seek membership in private preservation organizations, particularly at the local level. These organizations tend to have influential affiliations, and hence help set the local preservation agenda. Black resources must find their way onto these agendas.

The major charge of the African American community is to gather and organize existing resources so that they can be

<sup>29</sup> National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, Minority Issues Task Force: Professional Development Plan, 1989, p. 2.

put to best use in support of the cause, and so that they are in a better position to be effective participants.

### Preservation Community

People: People in this community include public professionals at all three levels of government as well as in the private sector.

Resources: Resources that must be provided by the preservation community include funding and fund-raising support, technical assistance, information (program guidelines, pamphlets, documentation forms, etc.), publicity and media attention, job opportunities in the field, and in some instances, support for the protection for threatened properties.

Actions: Actions for the preservation community include the following:

1. Continue efforts to attract more African Americans and other minorities to the field. Present an open door policy so that minorities can see that the preservation movement is not exclusive. Full participation is possible only when democratic structures open wide the doors to their organizations.

2. Demystify the procedures and guidelines to allow easier comprehension, and thus more effective participation. Outsiders may otherwise perceive the programs as purposely shrouded in complexity to minimize their capacity to participate.
3. Provide technical assistance and resources to help organize and establish statewide organizations.
4. Lend credibility and legitimacy to such organizations through association with public and private preservation programs.
5. In the case of the states, implement the recommendations of the NCSHPO report, to include development of more minority heritage educational resources, placing greater emphasis on National Register nominations (to include broadened interpretation of historic resource criteria), and active recruitment of minority professionals into the field.
6. Through public education, work to change the perception that minority resources have little significance to history.
7. Utilize financial incentives and other means to increase participation in minority preservation at the local government level.

## Planning Community

People: The players are obviously practicing planning professionals. Their roles will differ slightly dependent upon whether they work in local, regional, state, or federal agencies, or in the private sector. No distinction is made here as to race.

Resources: Planners bring a wide range of resource skills to the framework. These include knowledge of zoning laws and other public ordinances, skills in group organizing and goal-setting, advocacy, research, fund-raising, and political influence, in addition to being the keepers of local and regional comprehensive plans. Planners can play the key role of helping community organizations develop and focus goals, and work effectively within the context of the local planning process.

Actions: Actions that planners can take in support of African American heritage preservation include the following:

- 1) First and foremost, realize historic preservation as the friend it is and work historic preservation into the comprehensive planning process. Take time to learn more about historic preservation and how it might be used to compliment planning goals. Planners should also lobby for minority resources in cities and counties that don't have preservation commissions.

- 2) Lend technical advice and assistance to grassroots attempts at formal organization.
- 3) Help minority communities build consensus in regards to their preservation goals so that community divisiveness does not work in favor of redevelopment.
- 4) Review established zoning ordinances to determine how they might unnecessarily threaten historic properties, and amend them as necessary. Many historic districts, especially those in minority communities have been destroyed over time by incremental revision of the zoning ordinance. Seek ways to apply such ordinances to better protect historic areas.
- 5) Use available tools, such as downzoning, preservation ordinances, pro-active code enforcement, and incentive zoning to protect, encourage, and promote preservation in minority communities.
- 6) Help communities to understand local government processes and how they may effectively work through them to achieve their goals.
- 7) Help relatively powerless communities establish a defense against discriminatory practices effected through public policy. Root out and expose such practices wherever they are found to exist.



## Political Community

People: Political players include mayors, councilmen, and commissioners at the local level, governors, legislators, and various agencies at the state level, and the President, Congress, and federal agencies at the national level. The executives at all three levels are vital for their capacity to set a general tone of importance for issues in the public policy arena. Pertinent examples include federal endorsement of the Martin Luther King, Jr. national holiday and the Florida governor's endorsement of legislation designed to promote African American heritage preservation. Georgia governor Zell Miller has also played a figurehead role in recent years by publicly endorsing the projects of the Minority Historic Preservation Committee.

Resources: Political resources include the exercise of decision-making power, policy-making, setting the tone for an administration, determining funding appropriations, the ability to bring issues to the public eye, advocacy within the chambers of government, the power to draft legislation, and the ability to promote the cause through symbolic actions.

Actions: As I stipulated earlier, politicians are the primary shapers of public policy, and as such, exert tremendous influence upon the capacity of all Americans to

realize their goals. African American heritage preservation must be politicized if it is to succeed. Actions required of the political community include:

- 1) Recognition of historic preservation as a complimentary element for improving society.
- 2) At the state and federal levels, creation of funding programs to allow minority communities to undertake the rehabilitation of inner-city historic neighborhoods without displacement.
- 3) Strive for more equitable distribution of public investment in all areas of our cities.
- 4) Development of targeted legislation such as that developed in Florida.
- 5) Help spread awareness and support by elevating the issue with the general public.

In order for the framework to be successful, the four communities discussed above must work together. Realistically speaking, this concept's chance of success is reduced until people resolve their differences. It calls for a tearing down of the walls of misconception which currently separate America along racial, class, and other group specific lines a true challenge for such a heterogeneous society. It requires people to form new alliances that cross these lines

## CHAPTER 9

### CONCLUSION

The framework I have described is designed to activate a largely dormant force for historic preservation. It seeks to empower a race and give them a renewed sense of pride, identity, and control over their destiny as Americans. It is a framework for independence and self-help, a starting point for giving new meaning and direction to a people, a point of departure for rethinking a nation's history, and a call for alliance-building and the integration of minorities into the mainstream preservation movement.

In this paper I have covered a lot of ground. I have used data from eleven southern state to determine the current state of efforts to preserve African American heritage. Having demonstrated that underrepresentation does in fact exist, I sought to illustrate how this has injured not only buildings and places, but also the vitality of millions of Americans and their belief in the American dream. I have openly discussed the manifestations of cultural racism and how they have been used to oppress minority groups in this country, and injure society as a whole by maintaining a barrier between people.

On a positive note, I evaluated successful program efforts in the subject states with the hope that other states (and localities) will follow this lead and reaffirm their commitment to the recommendations of the NCSHPO. I have discussed a number of perceived barriers, offering education in every case, as the remedy. For African Americans, I have attempted to provide examples of where communities have come together to improve their situations, as examples to show that it can and has been done. I've argued for "balanced" consideration of heritage preservation in light of more pressing problems faced by society.

Finally, I offered a conceptual framework through which a variety of actors might work together to further this cause. There is an undeniable link between historical underrepresentation and misrepresentation, and the lack of meaningful participation by African Americans in so many aspects of mainstream life in this country.

If African Americans are to take the initiative in preserving and promoting their own cultural heritage, they must have the support of the other three communities described in the last chapter, because discrimination and racism are very real barriers which have been spawned by perceived ones. Distrust and suspicion of mal-intent are deductions of personal fears present on both sides. The

imbalance of power is also very real. There are those in society who are as equally committed to hindering the rise of minority groups as others are to seeing all barriers removed. Minority cultures acting alone may never overcome these obstacles, especially if most white Americans are indifferent. More must empathize and support this movement, most notably those in positions to affect outcomes.

As Americans, we are blessed to live in such a culturally rich society, but with such diversity, comes the challenge to overcome, accept, and actually relish that which makes us different. We have yet to succeed in reaping the full benefits because we often cannot see beyond class differences and color. We waste so much of our potential resource base perpetuating discrimination and racial separation. There is no doubt that America is a great nation, but to quote Dr. Maulana Karenga, "What ever America is, it could have been so much more."<sup>30</sup>

Through education and communication we further dissolve the barriers, real and perceived, that separate us. We begin to see that people are essentially the same, having the same needs, desires, and aspirations. As more people begin to realize and accept this undeniable fact, detractors on both sides will find it increasingly difficult to buttress the

<sup>30</sup> "The History Revisionist Movement," The Ron Reagan Show, November 26, 1991.



crumbling walls that have kept different sectors of American society apart for so long. Preservationists, I believe, now see the potential which lies in the minority community, and is adapting its programs to allow greater participation. By working together, and with the help of the other professional communities I have noted, we can bring Dr. Karenga's words back into the present tense.

## CHAPTER 10

### APPENDICES

The materials included here are intended to provide information, helpful hints, points of contact, and example documents for groups seeking to organize minority preservation organizations, establish programs, and undertake specific preservation projects. The target audience is planners, politicians and foremost, African Americans wanting to know more about historic preservation and how to get involved. Most of the information I have either authored or taken from my experience with the Georgia Office of Historic Preservation.

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## APPENDIX A

### Mailing Addresses of State Historic Preservation

#### Offices

<p><b>Alabama Historical Commission</b> 725 Monroe Street Montgomery, AL 36130</p> <p><b>Georgia Office of Historic Preservation</b> 1462 Floyd Towers East 205 Butler Street Atlanta, Georgia 30334</p> <p><b>Louisiana Office of Cultural Development</b> Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism Baton Rouge, LA 70804</p> <p><b>North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources</b> 109 East Jones Street Raleigh, NC 27601</p> <p><b>Tennessee Department of Conservation</b> 701 Broadway Nashville, TN 37203</p> <p><b>Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Historical Services</b> 221 Governor Street Richmond 23219</p>	<p><b>Arkansas Historic Preservation Program</b> Suite 200, The Heritage Center 225 East Markham Little Rock, AR 72201</p> <p><b>Florida Department of State</b> R.A. Gray Building 500 S. Bronaugh Tallahassee, FL 32399</p> <p><b>Mississippi Department of Archives and History</b> P.O. Box 751 Jackson, MS 39205</p> <p><b>South Carolina Department of Archives and History</b> P.O. Box 11669 Columbia, SC 29211</p> <p><b>Texas Historical Commission</b> P.O. Box 12276 Capitol Station Austin, TX 78711</p> <p><b>The National Register of Historic Resources</b> Interagency Resources Division P.O. Box 37127 Washington, DC 20013</p>
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## APPENDIX B

### National Register Criteria

The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's roster of properties important in the history, architectural history, archaeology, engineering, and culture of the United States, its states and regions, and its communities. The National Register is maintained by the National Park Service, and expanded through nominations by individuals, organizations, state and local governments, and federal agencies.

The National Register criteria identify the range of resources and kinds of significance that will qualify properties for listing on the National Register. Local historic preservation commissions and chief elected officials in Certified Local Governments use them in commenting on nominations, and many local governments further use them as the basis of their own evaluation systems. The four primary criteria are listed below:

Criteria A: A property may be registered if it is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.



Criteria B: A property may be registered if it is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

Criteria C: A property may be listed if it embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or if it represents the work of a master builder.

Criteria D: A property may be registered if it has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

For further information on the National Register of Historic Places, contact the National Park Service at the address shown on the previous page.

State Offices also prepare fact sheets and information bulletins on common inquiries in to the available services. Information is readily available on such additional topics as how to put together a National Register nomination, how to survey properties and compile histories, and information on grants, loans and tax incentives.

## APPENDIX C

### Sample Organization, Duties, and Responsibilities of a Minority Preservation Committee

Organization: The organization and duties presented here are based upon that of the MHPC in Georgia. The committee should be organized under a chairperson. The vice-chairperson position is optional, but we have found that a second executive position is vital to sustaining the work of the committee when the chairperson is not available to do so.

Control and authority within the committee should be decentralized. Responsibility is dispersed to members referred to as regional representatives. In Georgia, there are nine members, each responsible for coordinating minority preservation activities within their assigned areas. A representative is also responsible for maintaining contact with an informal network of people in their regions who are interested in preservation, and providing information on activities and events. The nine representative system for Georgia was so formulated to match the nine regional development centers in the state so that committee members can obtain preservation and planning assistance in the

performance of their duties. A short list of primary responsibilities are shown below.

Chairperson - The chairperson shall perform the following functions in the execution of his/her duties:

- (1) Monitor and promote attainment of committee goals and objectives.
- (2) Coordinate committee activities with the state preservation office.
- (3) Organize, attend, and conduct all meetings.
- (4) Represent the committee outside meetings, official gatherings, speaking engagements, and other public functions.
- (5) Oversee special projects through coordination with technical advisors, sponsors, project interns, and fellow committee members.
- (6) Meet monthly with the State preservation office to plan and review projects and activities.
- (7) Seek new membership in the committee and seek further opportunities to spread public awareness of the committee and its activities.

The Vice-chairperson shall:

- (1) Perform the duties of the chairperson in the event this individual is unable to do so.

- (2) Oversee the regional representative system by maintaining regular contact with representatives.
- (3) Keep committee members motivated and active in their communities.
- (5) Meet with the chairperson and state preservation office as necessary to help plan, organize and execute committee endeavors.
- (6) Seek new membership in the committee and seek further opportunities to spread public awareness of the committee and its activities.

Regional Representatives shall:

- (1) Keep the vice chairperson informed of activities and projects within their regions.
- (2) Maintain a close working relationship with planners and preservation professionals in the regional development offices.
- (3) Spearhead individual project efforts in their own communities.
- (4) Provide advice and information on minority preservation to neighborhoods community groups, and individuals, making referrals as necessary.
- (5) Provide a channel of information to and from the informal preservation network.

## APPENDIX D

### Sample Goals for a Minority Preservation Committee

The goals are again base upon those of the MHPC with which I worked closely during my tenure with OHP. The four goals are:

- (1) Foster participation of minority groups and individuals in the statewide historic preservation movement.
- (2) Increase public awareness of the state's African American history both statewide and in local communities, and promote the preservation of properties associated with history.
- (3) Increase interaction at the local level between organizations, institutions, and individuals interested in working with minority preservation, local government, and local preservation organizations. Also to encourage interaction at the state level with such organizations as state Historic Preservation trusts.
- (4) Ensure the inclusion of African American and other minority resources in the state's coordinated planning at all levels. Work to ensure that these resources are taken into account in all phases of local planning.



### Population Characteristics of Survey States Black Population as a Percentage of Total Population

State	1990		% Black	1940		% Black	1890		% Black	1840		% Black
	Total	Black		Total	Black		Total	Black		Total	Black	
United States	248,709,873	30,788,000	0.12	131,699,275	12,865,518	0.10	62,947,714	7,488,676	0.12	23,191,876	3,638,808	0.16
Alabama	4,040,587	1,020,705	0.25	2,832,961	983,290	0.35	1,513,401	678,489	0.45	771,623	345,109	0.45
Arkansas	2,350,725	373,912	0.16	1,949,387	482,578	0.25	1,128,211	309,117	0.27	209,897	47,708	0.23
Florida	12,937,926	1,759,534	0.14	1,897,414	514,198	0.27	391,422	166,180	0.42	87,455	40,242	0.46
Georgia	6,478,216	1,746,565	0.27	3,123,723	1,084,927	0.35	1,837,353	858,815	0.47	906,185	384,613	0.42
Louisiana	4,219,973	1,299,281	0.31	2,363,880	849,303	0.36	1,118,588	559,193	0.50	517,762	262,271	0.51
Mississippi	2,573,216	915,057	0.36	2,183,796	1,074,578	0.49	1,289,600	742,559	0.58	375,651	310,808	0.83
North Carolina	6,628,637	1,456,323	0.22	3,571,623	981,298	0.27	1,617,949	561,018	0.35	869,039	316,011	0.36
South Carolina	3,486,703	1,039,884	0.30	3,486,703	1,039,884	0.30	1,899,804	814,164	0.43	668,507	393,944	0.59
Tennessee	4,877,185	778,035	0.16	2,915,841	508,736	0.17	1,767,518	430,678	0.24	1,002,717	245,881	0.25
Texas	16,986,510	2,021,632	0.12	6,414,824	924,391	0.14	2,235,527	408,171	0.18	212,592	58,588	0.28
Virginia	6,187,358	1,162,994	0.19	2,677,773	661,449	0.25	1,655,980	635,438	0.38	1,239,797	526,861	0.42
Subtotal	70,767,036	13,573,922	0.22	33,417,925	9,104,632	0.29	16,455,353	6,163,822	0.39	6,861,225	2,932,036	0.44
U.S. Comparison	28%	44%	181%	25%	71%	298%	26%	82%	327%	30%	81%	278%

# The Black Population of States

The Black population exceeded 1 million in 16 States in 1990.

Three States had Black populations exceeding 2 million in 1990: New York, California, and Texas (figure 4). New York, which was the only State with 2 million or more Blacks in 1980 (2,402,000), had the largest Black population in both censuses. With the exception of Maryland, which placed Ohio as the 10th State, the 10 States with the largest Black populations in 1990 were the same States as in 1980.

Florida rose from sixth to fourth largest while Illinois fell from fourth to sixth.

The 10 States with the largest Black populations in 1990 are either in the South region (pp. 4-5) or are non-Southern States with some of the Nation's largest metropolitan areas. These latter States—New York, California, Illinois, and Michigan—were major recipients of the large-scale migration of Blacks from the South, especially during the 1940's, 1950's, and 1960's. In 1940, the only States with 1

million or more Blacks were Georgia (1,085,000) and Mississippi (1,075,000). New York (571,000), which ranked ninth, was the only non-Southern State among the top 10 in Black population in 1940.

In addition to the 10 States shown in figure 4, 6 other States had Black populations of 1 million or more in 1990: Virginia (1,163,000), Ohio (1,155,000), Pennsylvania (1,090,000), South Carolina (1,040,000), New Jersey (1,037,000), and Alabama (1,021,000). In 4 of these 16 States, the Black population reached 1 million during the 1980's: Maryland, South Carolina, New Jersey, and Alabama.

The Black population is slightly more concentrated than the total population. A majority of the Black population lived in 8 States in 1990 compared to 9 States for the total population. Fifty-eight percent of the Black population resided in the 10 States with the largest Black populations compared to 54 percent of the total population in the 10 most populous States.

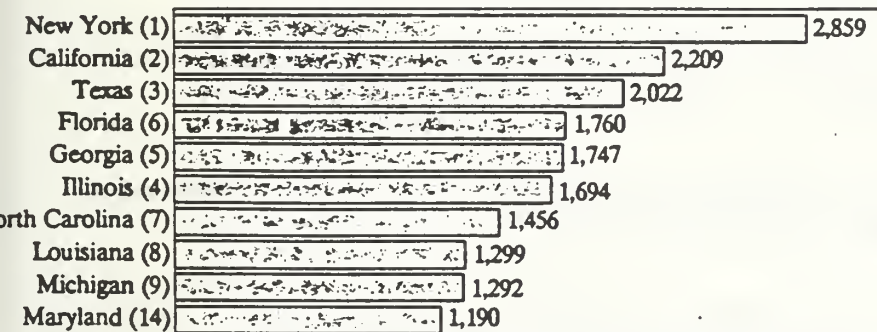
The largest increase in Black population in the 1980-90 decade was in New York (457,000), followed by Florida and California (figure 5). The 10 States with the largest increases together accounted for 74 percent of national Black population growth during the decade.

Among the 12 States with Black populations of 1 million or more in 1980, the Black growth rate in the 1980-90 decade ranged from 31 percent in Florida to 1 percent in Illinois (pp. 4-5). Among the 17 States with Black populations of 100,000 to 1 million in 1980, the growth rate ranged from 42 percent in Washington State to no change in Arkansas. The District of Columbia's Black population declined 11 percent during the decade.

The highest percentages of Black population are in Southern States.

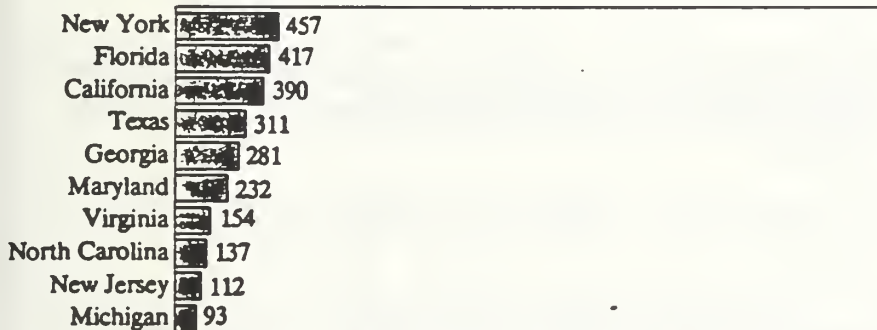
While 6 of the 10 States with the largest Black populations in 1990 are in the South, all ten of the States with the highest percentage of Black population are in the South (figure 6), ranging from Mississippi (35.6 percent) to Tennessee (16.0 percent). (The corresponding figure for the District of Columbia was 65.8 percent.) Four States outside the South had Black percentages above the national figure of 12.1 percent: New York (15.9 percent), Illinois (14.8 percent), Michigan (13.9 percent), and New Jersey (13.4 percent). There were nine States in which Blacks represented less than 1 percent of the population in 1990: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, and Utah.

Figure 4.  
Ten States With the Largest Black Population: 1990  
(In thousands. Rank in 1980 in parentheses)



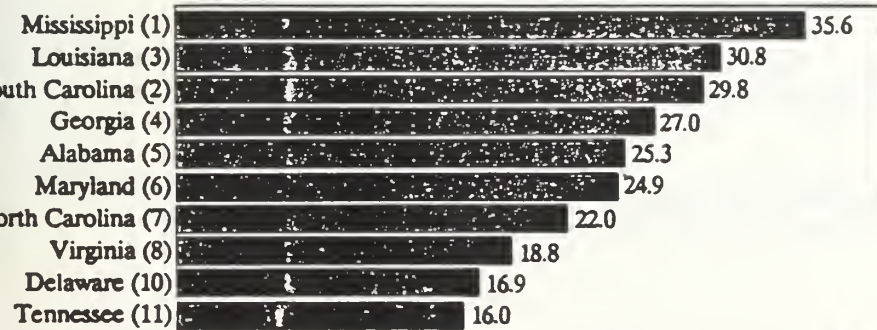
Scales are not comparable in corresponding figures on pp. 3, 6, 7, and 8.

Figure 5.  
Ten States With the Largest Increases in  
Black Population: 1980 to 1990  
(In thousands)



Scales are not comparable in corresponding figures on pp. 3, 6, 7, and 8.

Figure 6.  
Ten States With the Highest Percentage Black: 1990  
(Rank in 1980 in parentheses)



Scales are not comparable in corresponding figures on pp. 3, 6, 7, and 8.

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